THE LIFE OF
FATHER BALTHASAR ALVAREZ.

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THE

LIFE

OF

FATHER BALTHASAR ALVAREZ,

RELIGIOUS OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

BY F. LOUIS DU PONT,

OF THE SAME SOCIETY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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PREFACE.

From the close of the fifteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century, Spain was the fruitful mother of many great men, and of many illustrious saints. Their names will spring up in the memories of all who are even moderately acquainted with the History of the Spanish nation. Among these great and holy men, there is one who may be well known to those only who have given themselves to the study of ascetic literature. His name is Balthasar Alvarez. The life of this eminent spiritualist was written by a man whose fame in the ascetical world is greater than his master's—I mean Louis de Ponte. The life was written in Spanish, and was long ago translated into French. It is from the French that the following version has been made.

The translator undertook the work with pleasure at the suggestion of a friend who imagined that the taste for spiritual reading, which had been spread commonly amongst Catholics, chiefly through the instrumentality of the holy Dr. Faber, might be yet more and more refined by the meditation and reading of a life so eminently spiritual as that of Father Balthasar Alvarez. Sanctity we know has never been absent from God's Church, although the outward manifestations of it may be less brilliant to men's eyes at one time than at another. The translator can but hope that the study of the life of a man, of whom St. Teresa spoke in terms of extraordinary commendation, may animate those who read, to copy the example of so bright a pattern.

And in conclusion, the translator begs that our Blessed Lord may raise up in His Church many such directors of souls, who shall lift to the highest level of

holiness those who are entrusted to their spiritual guidance. And so it shall come to pass in these days, as in former ones, that confessors and penitents shall mutually help each other on the way to perfection in God's love, and both fulfil the commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Be ye perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect."

January 30th, 1868.

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THE LIFE OF

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CHAPTER XXV.

FATHER BALTHASAR DEPARTS FOR ROME—FULL OF CONFIDENCE IN PROVIDENCE, HE EXPERIENCES ITS POWERFUL PROTECTION.

It is customary in the Society for the different provinces, each to send every year to the General a procurator, to give him an account of the state of things, and deliberate with him regarding all their interests. This messenger must be one who has professed the four vows, and a prudent and experienced man, on account of the importance of the affairs entrusted to him. For all these reasons, Father Balthasar was most assuredly worthy to represent the province to which he belonged. When, therefore, it became necessary to choose a procurator in 1571, he was unanimously elected. Some accidental words having made him aware of this intention of the fathers, a few days before the election, he was seized with great fear, both because he thought himself incapable of fulfilling so important a commission, and because he dreaded the injury that the distractions of so long a journey

might cause to his interior spirit. However, for fear of illusion, he had recourse to God, and promised to do His holy will in this, as in all other things. This prompt and generous submission had the following result; he represented to himself during this prayer, the object of his alarm, as a great tree, which he offered himself to carry without a single branch or leaf being removed; then God enlightened him with so clear a light, that it dissipated the darkness of his mind, wonderfully strengthened his will, and discovered to him the truths, which I am going to reproduce here, as he wrote them in his journal. "If God requires this journey of thee, why dost thou fear to undertake it? thou shouldst rather look upon it as a favour, that He deigns to make use of thee in what concerns His interests. Moses was also afraid, when God commanded him to journey out of Egypt; he did it, however, and what harm happened to him? If, like him, I venture to argue with my Master, do I not render myself guilty of the cowardice He reproached him with? is it not in some measure to refuse Him my obedience? Jeremias, also, on a similar occasion, gave way to fear, and said to God, 'A, a, a, Domine, Deus; ecce nescio loqui, quia puer ego sum.' What answer did our Lord make to him? 'It is I who have chosen thee to announce My word, and thou hast the boldness to tell Me it is impossible?' When God charges any man with an affair, that of himself he cannot manage, he may be certain that this Good Master will give him the ability he

stands in need of; otherwise He would contradict Himself, for the end is only obtained through the means. These reflections filled me with courage and confidence. I felt no doubt, that if I departed for Rome with loving obedience, God would accompany me on the way, and transact the business with me. From that moment I accepted the charge, and recommended this acceptance to His mercy, and the intercession of His Blessed Mother. This sufficed to restore my tranquillity."

He was not deceived in his hopes, for in no other of his journeys did he so happily experience the vigilant care of Providence over him. Though he was obliged to traverse countries inhabited by heretics, no harm happened to him. He was enabled to satisfy the most ardent of his desires by celebrating Holy Mass every day, and performing all the exercises prescribed by the rule. Still more, the roads being in good order, from the fineness of the weather, he profited by it to spend whole days in prayer. The recollection he drew from it did not forsake him when he entered Rome, the streets of which he traversed, without raising his head. During his stay, it was in vain proposed to him to go and see the wonders contained in this queen of cities. He preferred to give to prayer every moment that his occupations allowed him. His superiors, struck with this rare virtue, conceived a high opinion of him, and planned to keep him, to place him at the head of the Roman noviciate; but the humble father,

who feared nothing so much as to be brought forward, managed so well that he obtained from his General leave to return. This General was St. Francis Borgia, a most enlightened man, as is well known, and who felt such confidence in Father Balthasar, that he had several spiritual conferences with him, and consulted him on subjects regarding the welfare of the Society.

Having left to return, in company with Father James Miron, one of the General's assistants, who was going to Spain to make a visitation of all the Provinces, this father studied him to find out his degree of perfection; after which, full of respect for his virtue, and of affection for himself, he made known to him his wish to have him for a travelling companion. But Father Balthasar found means to decline this honour. "This employment," he answered, "would be injurious to me; for my poor virtue cannot bear to be exposed; it requires the balmy air of solitude and the example of the novices at Métine, to keep it alive and preserve any kind of fervour." Father Miron smiled at this answer, but, like an able man, he profited by it to sound his humility. "Before you refuse me, think seriously, father; the proposal I make to you for my own interest, is not opposed to yours. By going with me to all the houses in Spain and Portugal, you will acquire a knowledge of places, persons, and things, and then Father-general would naturally think of appointing you visitor." "What are you saying, Father?" answered the holy man, laughing.

"Ah, if you knew how little I wish for great offices, you would not invite me to wish for this. Far from seeking after it, I would do everything in my power to escape it, so great a repugnance have I for it. I have only one wish, that is to pass my whole life in some isolated house, perfumed with the sweet odour of a noviciate." The visitor, edified by his answer, pressed him no further.

While he was in France, Divine Providence clearly showed the care with which he was protected. One day, after dining in a town, the party left it to go and sleep at another, some leagues off, and on their way met a peasant, who told them not to go by the mountain road, as it was infested with robbers, but to follow a path he showed them across a deep and marshy valley. The father and his companions hesitated a little before following this advice, but, after a short deliberation, they made up their minds to take it. When they came to the meadows, their horses began to sink up to the belly, and then their courage failed. "It is not wise to go further," they said to one another, "for if the water is so deep at the edge, what will it be in the middle? It would be different if the foundation were solid; but it is thick and almost impenetrable mud, and it will not be a short distance, for these bogs extend as far as we can see, and our horses most certainly cannot bear until evening, the fatigue of such a road, and perhaps they may be lost and ourselves also." "That is true," answered another, "but dangers no less alarming are to be met with on the mountains."

They were in this perplexity, when they heard the voice of a child telling them not to go on, but to take the road at the foot of the mountains. This warning only changed their difficulty. "Is it God," they said to each other, "who sends us this advice? Is not this child connected with the robbers, who wish to entrap us?" "Let us pray," said Father Balthasar; they did so, and all had the inspiration to go straight on. They therefore continued their journey across the meadows, and at last came to the edge of a pond, where a new subject of alarm awaited them. They saw a boat, which came from the mountains, containing several rowers, clothed in red, and coming straight towards them. Feeling sure that these were robbers, they thought of turning back, but, perceiving that they were making for the opposite shore, their terror was removed. They had now only the fear of losing themselves, or of coming to deeper water, which did not, however, prevent them from going on. The more they advanced, however, the more uneasy they became, and after going half a league, they stopped to deliberate, and, thinking it rash to proceed, they resolved to turn back. They did so, in fact, and then perceived a horseman, superbly dressed, approaching them by the road they had taken, and riding through the water as if it had been solid ground. Coming up to them, he courteously saluted them, and told them to follow him without fear, as he knew the road perfectly, and would lead them safe and sound out of this perilous path. They fol-

lowed him, and their horses, animated by that of their guide, went at so good a pace, that they were out of the marsh before sunset. "Now," said the gentleman, "you are only at half a league's distance from the town. That is the road, it is good and so frequented, that you cannot lose yourselves, adieu." He then disappeared, and the travellers, convinced that he was an angel of God, got down from their horses, and returned due thanks to Almighty God. When they were again on their way, the companions of our two holy religious, letting them go before, had an innocent dispute among themselves. Some said, "We owe this protection from heaven to Father Miron. Did you see, that whenever anything was said about turning back, he persisted in wishing to follow this road?" "No," said the others, "this favour was granted for the sake of Father Balthasar, for during our perplexities he never ceased praying for one moment." As for myself, I feel no doubt that this miraculous protection was the reward of this holy man's confidence, for it had already procured him a similar favour, on an occasion which I shall soon mention. What confirms me in this opinion is, that, at this time especially, Father Balthasar had a singular devotion towards the holy angels. I require no further proof of this, than the following extract from his journal, dated December 22, 1571:—

"While I was making my morning prayer, God gave me, by a singular favour, a great love for the holy angels, especially for him who announced to

Mary, the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Word, for him who consoled our Lord in the garden of Olives, and for him who offers to the Eternal Father, the victim of the holy Sacrifice. I felt also a particular affection, united with a holy reverence, for those blessed spirits who assisted my Saviour in His prayers, His combats and his journeys, which they continue to do for the just on similar occasions; also for the angels, who assist me in fulfilling the duties of my office, especially for my own angel guardian, and lastly, for those of the Fathers and Brothers who are entrusted to me, or will be so in future. Since this time, the devotion of which I speak is no longer for me a voluntary devotion, it is a duty which I am bound through obedience to perform, our Lord having especially commanded me to do so." After this, we cannot be surprised to see the angels, whom he loved so tenderly, coming to his assistance, not only on this occasion, but on many others.

I cannot leave this subject without recalling to mind, the claims that our Angel Guardians have to our love and obedience, especially as they are indicated in the extract I have just copied. We owe them love and obedience, then, because God commands it, and because their services require them from us. Yes, 1. God requires that we should render them a worship of love and obedience, and if this precept is not written in His law, it is, so to speak, in the nature of things. Consider, now: God has commanded them to take care of us, to govern and instruct us, and protect us in dan-

gers: "Angelis suis mandavit de te, ut custodiant te in omnibus viis tuis." And they accomplish this order of their Master with as much zeal as love; and shall we not feel ourselves bound to be docile to their inspirations, to obey their injunctions, and follow the direction they give us for the good of our souls, and shall we refuse them the tribute of our love? 2. We are a thousand times more deeply indebted to them than we can imagine; for their benefits are as precious as they are innumerable. We are, then, bound in gratitude to respect and love them as our greatest benefactors. "What can I do," said young Tobias to the Angel Raphael, to "acknowledge the services you have rendered me? I could not repay them, even by offering myself to you as a slave." Such should be the sentiments of each one of us. Yes, let us serve them with the most tender devotion. Is it too much for a mortal man to serve a heavenly Prince, who is the first to abase himself in his service? Most assuredly, we do not thereby return him one half of what he gives us.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FATHER, ON HIS RETURN, VISITS THE HOUSE OF LORETTO, AND TAKES AWAY WITH HIM A COPY OF THE PICTURE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN, PAINTED BY ST. LUKE.—HE MANIFESTS HIS DEVOTION TOWARDS THE SAINTS, AND ESPECIALLY TOWARDS THEIR QUEEN.

Let us retrace our steps; for I follow the order of events more closely than that of time. The holy religious, in this journey to Rome, manifested on two occasions his tender devotion for our Blessed Mother Mary, a devotion which he had imbibed from his early youth, and which caused him great persecutions from the devil; insomuch that he one day said to him: "Cease to honour that woman you call Mary, and I will no longer molest you." The pious Balthasar did not follow this infernal counsel; he saw in it, on the contrary, an additional motive for persevering in this devotion, and for seizing every opportunity of increasing it. This gave rise to two facts that I will now relate.

Every one knows that Loretto possesses the oratory, where the Angel Gabriel came to announce to Mary, that she should be the Mother of God, and where, in effect, the Incarnation of the Word took place in her womb. It is therefore

one of the holiest sanctuaries on earth, and people flock thither from all parts, to satisfy their devotion. Father Balthasar could not make up his mind to leave Italy, without going to pour out his heart in this holy place. He went, in effect, and spent several hours in prayer there, with his usual fervour. What were the fruits of this pilgrimage? That is more than I can say. The well known generosity of the Blessed Virgin does not allow us to doubt of his receiving great favours and signal graces; but he took care to keep them to himself, with many other things. Nevertheless, God permitted that he should give some hint of them, in a dangerous illness which he had a few years later, at Val-d'Olet. When another religious was one day exhorting him to recommend himself to St. Joseph, whose picture he presented to him, the father answered: "You are right; that is exactly what the Mother of God said to me on a certain occasion." The religious, wondering at this answer, went to the brother infirmarian, and asked him if he knew anything of the devotion of the sick man to St. Joseph. This infirmarian was Brother Sancio, who had been the father's companion in his journey to Rome, and who for many years had been intimate with him, which had been of no little assistance in making him a man of prayer, and of great sanctity. He gave this answer: "I remember that on leaving the house of Loretto, he told me he had conceived a great devotion towards the glorious St. Joseph."

Is not there reason to infer from this, that Blessed Mary appeared to the father in the house of Loretto; that she instructed him as a mistress on certain points closely connected with his salvation and perfection, and especially recommended him to have a particular devotion towards St. Joseph? I find in this alone, a certain sign of the good will of this Queen of Virgins towards him, doubtless in return for his love towards her. And as the Son of God inclines His friends to be devout to His holy Mother, as a mark of their love for Him, so Blessed Mary gives to those whom she loves, feelings of tenderness for her spouse, and sees in that the proof of their veneration and love for herself.

To this first fact, in itself so conclusive, I will add another, which proves no less strongly his devotion to the Blessed Virgin. In the church of St. Mary Major, in Rome, is preserved a picture of the Blessed Virgin holding her Son in her arms, which is believed to have been painted by the Evangelist St. Luke. St. Francis Borgia, whose tender devotion to Mary is universally known, had a copy of it taken by a skilful artist, and afterwards multiplied them, so as to send copies to different places, convinced that this would contribute to propagate devotion towards this Queen of Virgins. Father Balthasar, having seen these precious pictures, wished to have one, and received it from the General. It could not have fallen into better hands, or into any more capable of making it useful. In the first place,

he carried it about him during the whole of the journey, in the confidence that he should thereby be preserved from dangers; then, on his arrival at Metine, he had it magnificently framed, and placed it in the chapel of the noviciate, that his novices, having it constantly before their eyes, might conceive a true devotion towards Mary, which is one of the most powerful means for attaining the perfection belonging to their religious vocation. He himself made frequent visits to this beloved image, loved to recite his office before it, and sometimes passed whole nights at its feet, which often gained for him extraordinary favours. Not content with this, he always wore about him a small engraving of this picture, not only as a mark of his love, but also as a shield against temptations. He celebrated the feasts of the Blessed Virgin with an increase of devotion, and they were for him days of grace, and of special favours. I will mention an example, which I find in his journal.

"On the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, I received two special lights in prayer; the first led me to ask earnestly of God that He would give me, after so many years spent in His service, a heart like that which His Blessed Mother received at the moment of her conception. The second, in showing me, very clearly, that in giving Himself to us, He has also given us His Father and His Mother; inspired me with the thought of asking Him, as a new favour, to offer Himself to us in return, to enable us to pay

them the tribute of our respect and loving gratitude. These two sentiments made a deep impression on me, and still remain engraved in my heart."

His intimacy with Father Guttierez, a great servant of Mary, assisted him greatly in loving her still more. This father, in return for his tender devotion, had often been honoured with visits from this august Queen, and once in particular, she condescended to thank him for a service he had rendered her. The fact deserves to be mentioned, as Father Balthasar was concerned in it. The Venerable John of Avila having said in a sermon, that the grace bestowed on Mary was more abundant than that of all angels and men together, this opinion was highly pleasing to Father Balthasar and his friend, because it was glorious to their Queen, and calculated to inspire her devout servants with more profound veneration; they resolved, in consequence, to make it generally known, and with this intention they asked Father Salazar to prove, that this opinion was conformable to the doctrine of the Saints, and to right reason, and consequently probable on solid grounds. This great theologian, who was himself very devout to Mary, wrote a treatise thereupon, which gave great satisfaction to the two fathers, and later on, entered into the subject with a completeness that left nothing to be desired.

Father Balthasar's piety was not confined to the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and the angels;

it extended to all the blessed, and especially to his patron, to those of the places he inhabited, and to the protectors of the kingdom of Spain. He visited their tombs, venerated their relics and holy pictures, celebrated their feasts with great fervour, and prayed to them with as much respect as confidence. He used to say on this subject, that there are two methods of conversing with the saints, either by speaking to them as intimate friends of God, and begging them to intercede for us; or by offering to them the prayers we address to God, in the confidence that He will receive them more willingly from them than from us. "It is thus," he added, "that we celebrate holy Mass in their honour, and that we offer to them Paters and Aves." As for himself, he honoured them in both these ways, which procured him great graces. I could give many examples: but I will restrict myself to one alone.

One day, on awaking, he found himself in a state of consolation and sweetness, which he had never before experienced; and at the same time, he received a light, which clearly showed him what it is for a soul to be united with God, and what she is without Him. This is not the place to make known the instruction he received; I will speak of it elsewhere. What now concerns us, is to prove that his devotion to the saints was the cause of this grace. He wrote on this subject in his journal: "Having begun to examine, to what saint I owed this useful and consoling inspiration, I discovered that my benefactor was St.

Millau, whose festival was celebrated that day, and to whom I had had for some time a great devotion. God made known to me also that Mary Diaz, whom I had formerly known at Avila, had some share in it. I then rendered thanks to the Divine Goodness, and to these blessed souls who deigned to take in me so undeserved an interest."

What follows will complete the proof of Father Balthasar's great veneration for the happy inhabitants of the holy city. "When seeking one day for a subject of prayer, relative to these friends of God, these words of the seventy-first Psalm came to my mind: 'Their name is honourable before Him.' 'Honorabile nomen eorum coram illo.' In meditating on them, I wished to know why and how the Divine Majesty magnifies His servants so much, not only in heaven, but also on earth, at the same time that He reproves and severely chastises them for their faults. At first sight, these two things seemed to me irreconcilable; but through the Divine light I saw that this reverence of God for His saints was certain, and the reason He gave me for it, filled me with astonishment. He also showed me, that the saints are like so many torches burning before the Most Blessed Sacrament; like rays of the true Sun of Justice; like the stars in the firmament; like the waters of a great river, which has its source in heaven, under the very throne of God; like the branches of a Sacred Vine, which is no other than the Saviour of our souls. I then

began to weep, seeing how different are our lives from theirs, and I was confounded to see myself so inferior even to those young and weak virgins who are now so high in glory."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FATHER IS CHARGED WITH THE PROVINCE OF CASTILE DURING THE ABSENCE OF THE PROVINCIAL, WHO GOES TO ROME WITH TWO OTHER RELIGIOUS—ALL THREE ARE TAKEN BY THE HERETICS—EFFORTS MADE BY THE FATHER TO RESCUE THEM.

Father Balthasar was in the enjoyment of profound peace in his dear solitude at Métine, when a sad accident occurred to trouble his repose. News from Rome announced the death of St. Francis Borgia, General of the Society; it was necessary, therefore, to hold a provincial council, and name three deputies who were to go to Rome, and take part in the election of a new General. This assembly took place at Burgos, and Fathers Guttierez and Suarez, learned, prudent, and spiritual men, were given as companions to Father Gilles Gonzalez, provincial of Castile, who entrusted his office to Father Balthasar, with the title of vice-provincial. This choice gave general satisfaction, as he was well known and universally esteemed. His visits were anxiously looked for, in

the colleges, each one rejoicing in the opportunity of manifesting his interior, and profiting by his lights. This expectation was not disappointed; for he acquitted himself of this duty to perfection. However, the joy caused by the good he did, was soon mingled with bitterness, from the following circumstance.

The three deputies, with a brother coadjutor who waited upon them, were recognized in the south of France, and stopped by the heretics; a sad misfortune, which Father Balthasar soon learned by two letters. One was from Father John Suarez, who gave a detailed account of this mishap; the other, written by the Father Provincial, was shorter, for he had been seriously wounded; as for Father Guttierez, he was no longer in this world. He had scarcely entered the prison where they were confined, than he gave up his soul to God. These letters are too edifying to be passed over. I will, therefore, transcribe them for the benefit of my readers.

LETTER FROM FATHER JOHN SUAREZ TO FATHER BALTHASAR ALVAREZ.

"Your reverence is aware of the advice given us by some merchants, friends of ours, to cross the south of France. This was also confirmed by Fathers Reinosi and Gallaretha, whom we saw at Vittoria; we therefore chose this route, wherein it has pleased God that we should meet with salutary trials. After travelling fifty miles beyond

the Spanish frontier, we were warned, that the road we were taking, passed under the walls of a fortress occupied by the heretics; we therefore took another road, which was four miles distant from this danger. It was in vain; their spies, who were on the look out, perceived us, and seeing, by our dress, that we were Spanish priests, took possession of us as an easy prey. They were six in number, armed to the teeth; and we were four poor religious men, without means, or any wish to defend ourselves. After taking us, they led us to a forest, where they seized part of our baggage, and a sum of money, intended to pay the expenses of our journey, until our arrival at Lyons. Some of them then took us to a neighbouring fortress, occupied by their troops. They there finished their task of robbery. Clothes, papers, books, crucifixes, rosaries, relics, everything was taken from us: and what was most afflicting, these last were treated in a most disgraceful manner. O what compassion does not the blindness of these men inspire! May our Lord deign to enlighten and lead them back to His fold, which they would be so happy to find! Let us beseech Him to preserve us from this foolish spirit, which takes evil for good, and good for evil; truth for falsehood, and falsehood for truth! This is the case with those, who prefer their own proud reason, to the teaching of authority. We hoped that this was all, but our misfortunes were not yet ended; they took it into their heads to lead us to the fortress, situated on

the road we first took, where their chiefs resided. They obliged us to depart, and God knows all we had to suffer in this short journey. Some walked before us, others followed, and some were mixed up with us. Those behind called to us to go on, and drove us with their sticks like beasts of burden, while our neighbours loaded us with all kinds of abuse. They began to deliberate what they should do with us. 'They must be killed with the sword,' said one: 'No,' said another, 'it would be better to drown them:' 'Why not propose to them to ransom themselves?' said a third. 'That is not my opinion,' said a fourth, 'they are Spaniards, their king has persuaded ours to pursue us rigorously, and to allow us no quarter. They are priests; and priests hinder the progress of our religion, and it is only by destroying them, that we can make it flourish; besides, why should we spare them? If we fell into the hands of their Inquisition, certainly it would show us no mercy.' This conversation, leaving us no hope of our lives being spared, we made our confessions to each other as we went along, and recommended ourselves to God, offering Him the sacrifice He seemed to require. On reaching the citadel, we were surrounded by the whole population, and overwhelmed with questions. Men, women, and even children, cried out all at once, asking: 'Are you priests? are you monks? are you canons? Is there a bishop amongst you?' We answered according to truth: insults succeeded to the questions, and God granted us grace to bear them

with patience. There were, however, two men and two women who compassionated our sorrowful position. 'They are strangers,' said they; 'whether friends or enemies, they have a right to our charity, for it is written in the Bible.' During this time, the chiefs held consultation, and decided that we should pay a considerable ransom, or be put to death. First, they sent some one to give us notice of it secretly, then they caused us to be brought before them, and said to us: 'Four thousand ducats or death.' Father Provincial having offered four hundred, one of the officers in a fury took Father Guttierez and myself to a bastion, made us mount on the platform, and was going to hurl us from the top to the bottom. At this juncture, another chief came up, who gave the father a blow with his sword. The wound was not mortal, however, for God ordained that the weapon turned aside instead of going straight. Father Provincial was soon brought to us with Brother Dari, and the Father Provincial, unable to conceal his compassion for Father Guttierez, received a serious wound himself. We remained there five hours with some good Catholic peasants, prisoners like ourselves. The weather was cold, and our enemies, through some remnant of compassion, made us, before they left, a small fire of brambles. The example of these brave peasants was a great help to us, for their faith, tranquillity and patience were admirable. Nevertheless, as death seemed impending, we recommended ourselves to God, to the Blessed Virgin, and to the

angels and saints, after which we deliberated what we should do. We wished to know whether we should ransom our lives. When the question was proposed, one replied: 'I beseech you, my fathers, let us speak no longer of ransoming ourselves: it is better to suffer death for Jesus Christ, when it is offered to us!' 'You are right,' replied another, 'for, in any case, we must die, and perhaps very soon, but not as gloriously as we can do now.' 'Would to God,' said a third, 'that our enemies had not proposed this ransom, for the opportunity was glorious; but as the proposition has been made, we should not allow ourselves to be killed for money: my opinion, therefore, is, that we should offer them a reasonable sum; if they refuse it, we will then make to God the sacrifice of our lives.' This counsel having prevailed, we made an agreement with the heretics, who, after several debates, agreed to restore our liberty and lives for a thousand crowns; they then gave us a room, served us with dinner, and their surgeon dressed the wounds of our brethren.

"This arrangement was some small consolation to us, but it did not last long. The following day Father Guttierez was seized with a violent pain in the side, and five days later he was no more. Near his death-bed, Father Provincial lay on the ground, suffering greatly from his wound. I waited upon him, with Brother Dari, not as we wished, and as this good father required, but as well as we could, in this state of poverty and captivity. The heretics, having found in my bag

a letter of exchange, endorsed with my name, and payable at Lyons, sent me thither, on condition of sending them the sum agreed upon, or bringing it back myself. I departed therefore, with an officer and two soldiers, charged to protect me in the places occupied by the troops. When I reached their frontier, they left me, and I continued my journey, but not without encountering fresh dangers. I had to pass near two forts, whose Catholic garrisons were reduced to such misery, that they robbed travellers, and killed them for safety. I fell into their hands: but when they saw I was going to fetch the price of my ransom, and that of my brethren, they thought it better to await my return, and let me go on. At ten miles distance I met Father Edmond, Provincial of France, and the Father Rector of our College at Rouen; they procured me the necessary sum; but, instead of allowing me to carry it myself, they dispatched a confidential messenger, who will, I hope, by this time, have brought the affair to an end, and restored our Religious to liberty. I am convinced that your reverence's prayers have greatly helped us, in this sorrowful adventure. Have the goodness to continue them, that we may reach Rome, from which we are yet distant twenty days' journey.

"Lyons, 10th March, 1573."

LETTER FROM FATHER GILLES GONZALEZ TO THE SAME FATHER.

"I will confine myself in this letter to the account of our liberation from captivity, for Father Suarez will have told you everything else. Until the death of Father Guttierez, everything we had to suffer seemed sweet and agreeable; so greatly were our hearts filled with consolation by divine grace. The illness of this good father afflicted us at its commencement, but our sorrow was slight, because we hoped for his recovery, though he constantly foretold his death. 'No, father,' I said to him, 'you will not die now.' God puts bounds to His trials; He would not add this misfortune to the sorrows that overwhelm us.' Alas! I perhaps dreaded it too much. The fact is, that for more than twenty years I had never desired anything so much as to preserve this good father's life. Nevertheless, in fifty hours' time, he had exchanged earth for heaven. He made his confession before death, but was deprived of the consolation of receiving the other sacraments of the Church, and we buried him where there was not the slightest token of religion. The next day Father Suarez left for Lyons, and I kept my bed, still suffering from my wound, near a soldier who was dying of a gangrened wound, the infection of which corrupted the air. I got up during Holy Week, to behold a sight that deeply afflicted me, for our soldiers passed these holy days in

feasting and debauchery. Our only resource was to go up to the tower, to perform our exercises without disturbance. On Easter Monday we had an alarm, the royal troops approached the castle, and the garrison feared a siege. During two days and three nights they left us no provisions but some chestnuts; we heard nothing but threats of death, and certainly if the siege had taken place we should have been killed: happily for us, however, the royal troops went off, and our keepers, reassured, allowed us to live as before. In the beginning of April, the officers having no longer any hope of receiving our ransom, came into our room full of fury, telling us they had decided that we were to die. Things were in this state, when a messenger sent by the Father Rector of Rouen arrived with a letter, that pacified the anger of our masters. Four days later, they received the money they expected, and came joyously to announce our freedom to us. Consequently we departed the next day, with an escort for our protection, but we had scarcely travelled two miles before we met with a new trial. Brother Dari, who was following us on foot, exhausted by the fatigue arising from the difficulty of the road, had a fainting-fit, which made us fear he would be unable to go any further. Our uneasiness was great, for we were in an enemy's country, and our guides had already left us. However, this swoon was not of much consequence, and after a few minutes, God restored his strength so completely, that he was able to walk on quickly; and about

eleven at night we took some repose, and the following day we entered a Catholic country. I am now in a college of the Society, where I am recruiting my strength. May God grant us all His holy love.

"Rouen, 22nd April, 1573."

Let us now return to our history. As soon as Father Balthasar received these letters, he at once set about repaying the sum advanced to the heretics, and Divine Providence furnished him with means to do it. Two novices, belonging to wealthy families, gave him 3000 ducats, which he himself took to Burgos, and changed for paper, payable at Lyons. Nothing more was required but to convey it to that town, and there were no opportunities. He then dispatched a young novice, disguised as a secular, and who spoke French well, who accomplished safely the commission entrusted to him. By means of this sum, the ransom was repaid, and sufficient remained to enable the Father Deputies to continue their journey.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE FATHER IS TRIED BY SEVERE ILLNESS, AND OTHER AFFLICTIONS, WHICH HE BEARS WITH PERFECT PATIENCE.

When a soul is so entirely detached from her own interests, and dead to herself, that she no longer desires anything but what God wills, and conforms herself in all things to His good pleasure, He usually sends her severe trials. St. Bernard gives us the reasons. "The mind of man," says this holy doctor, "being as much inclined to vanity as is his body to sensuality, perfection requires that he should overcome both. God permits therefore that he should meet with sufferings and humiliations, which mortify in him these two defects, and facilitate his progress in the opposite virtues." Such was His conduct towards Father Balthasar. He employed insults to perfect his humility, as we shall see further on; and sickness, to establish him firmly in patience. The sufferings preceded the humiliations, that this pious father might have the opportunity of making rapid progress in virtue; for St. Paul has said: "Virtue is made perfect in infirmity." "Virtus in infirmitate perficitur." He does not say this or that virtue, but virtue in general, to give us to understand that infirmities

are to the just, occasions for practising all the virtues, and making them shine forth for the greater glory of God, and the edification of the faithful. There are also two kinds of infirmities which solidly and efficaciously mortify the elect. These are, 1st. Those little habitual ailments, which, without preventing them from performing their duties, render them very painful. 2nd. Those sharp attacks of sickness, which happen at intervals, and last some time; for they therein find occasions for exercising and manifesting meekness, resignation, obedience, and perfect charity, especially when they prevent the accomplishment of duties, or threaten a life yet vigorous. Let us contemplate our holy father under both these circumstances. He had to bear severe illness, but his patience was so admirable, that to both physicians and infirmarians, it was a constant source of astonishment. Instead of trying to assuage his pain, he sought rather to increase it, keeping, for instance, his medicine in his mouth, to taste its bitterness, or eating without appetite, and even with repugnance, to mortify his taste. But never did he give so much edification as in a very serious illness, which attacked him on his return from Burgos, whither he had been for the cause we mentioned in the preceding chapter. It seems that God gave him warning of it, for his companion heard him during the journey, saying with great fervour: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be given up." Scarcely had he reached Val d'Olet than he

was obliged to keep his bed, and the disease in a few hours had made such progress that he lost consciousness, and almost life. The infirmarian, thinking he was dead, drew the sheet over his face, and was going to tell the sacristan to ring the bell to announce his death, when a sigh showed him his mistake. This restoration was a true miracle, attributed to the fervent prayers offered for him in the house, in the other communities of the town, and in churches by seculars; for every one knew what a loss the province would sustain by the death of this holy Religious. Others thought this blessing was the fruit of Extreme Unction, which, as we know, has the power of saving and curing the sick, when God sees it expedient for their salvation, or for His glory. But the state of the sick man was not much more hopeful, and those about him had little hope of his recovery. The father rector, being come to visit him, saw that Father Sancio, his faithful companion, who was watching by him, was ready to fall with fatigue, and sent him to take a little rest, but he had scarcely laid down than he heard a voice saying to him interiorly: "Get up, and go and give some food to the sick man." He well knew that the physicians had forbidden that food should be given him, saying it would cause his death; but, convinced that the command came from God, he hastened to take him some kind of soup. The infirmarian, accustomed to respect the physicians' orders, was not of this opinion. Recourse, therefore, was

had to the superior, who when informed of his inspiration, gave the necessary permission. Scarcely had the holy man taken this food than he felt better, and from this time the danger lessened, and his strength visibly returned. The near approach of death, far from diminishing his joy, seemed rather to increase it. "I do not fear it," he said; "it may come when it pleases: thank God, my soul is in peace, and I care for nothing on earth. If my hour is come, I very willingly consent to go; am I not happy to be able to offer this sacrifice to the most amiable will of my Creator?" But this was not the will of Providence, Who had merely intended to prove and perfect his resignation; and, after that, prolonged his life to employ it in works that would increase the Divine glory.

This sickness was not, however, thoroughly cured; for, having left Val d'Olet for Salamanca, he was attacked there by a quartan fever, that long troubled him: it was even more painful to him than the illness itself, on account of the sadness, caused by melancholy, the natural effect of this kind of fever. He bore this new trial, however, with his usual patience, and with a joy that excited the admiration of all who approached him. One of the fathers, who went to visit him during the paroxysm of the fever, struck by the serenity of his countenance, said: "One would think, father, to look at you, that you are not suffering, but you must in truth suffer greatly." "To tell you the truth," said the sick man, "I

do not think about it; it is indifferent to me whether I suffer much or little: what I desire is the accomplishment of the will of God, for that is my whole consolation and happiness." He recommended, however, that, out of prudence, persons should not be admitted to visit him at the times when his disease rendered him melancholy; "Because," he said, "I am then so ungracious and unamiable that I might disedify them." This was not the case, however, for his humour was disagreeable only to himself. This conviction was an advantage to himself, as his solitude allowed him to follow his attraction, by conversing with God alone.

These sicknesses, added to the fatigue of his many journeys, greatly injured his health, so that he was subject, for the rest of his life, to infirmities which, if not very painful, were at least very inconvenient: he bore them, not only without complaint, but knew so well how to conceal them, that even his Religious were not aware of them. He always fulfilled the duties of his office, and was present at the exercises of the community, as if he had enjoyed perfect health; which was not one of the smallest signs of his exalted virtue. Who does not know, in fact, that the conduct of imperfect persons is totally opposite? Their friends must know their sufferings, and even their smallest ailments: and when they have nothing to suffer, they complain of weak health. With what intention? That their courage may be admired, that they may receive dispensations, or

at least, obtain consolation. If they are disappointed, they murmur and complain, they are a trouble to every one, by their ill-humour and their singularities. Great souls, on the contrary, hide their sufferings as much as they can, until they betray themselves, unless the need of remedies oblige them to acknowledge them, or charity require them to speak, to encourage the weak by their example. Otherwise they rejoice in having God alone for a witness, and a comforter in their sufferings. These bodily sufferings were far from satisfying the love, this holy man bore to the cross. He was only really satisfied, when it pleased God to add to them humiliations and insults. Let us hear his own sentiments on this point: "We honour the cross of wood, to which our good Master was nailed, because it touched His adorable body: why then should we not honour the living cross of labours and pains of every kind, which was planted in His Divine Heart? Our veneration for the first makes us value even the smallest particle of it; should we then esteem less the smallest sufferings God sends us?" When he was with persons in affliction, he used to say to them: "Ah, if we are wise, we shall not allow one single leaf of the tree of the cross to fall to the ground."

It is no doubt most admirable to witness the life of those just souls, who, nailed to a bed of pain, bear with invincible patience the severest sufferings: there is, nevertheless, a more desirable position still: I mean an existence both

suffering and laborious at the same time; when infirmities, not incapacitating us entirely, allow us to act, though with great difficulty, in God's service. He often treats His best friends thus. I may cite St. Timothy, bishop and martyr. He was subject to frequent infirmities, as we learn from the apostle his master: but they never interrupted the course of his preaching. Such were also St. Gregory, St. Bernard, and St. Francis of Assisi, in whom we scarcely know which to admire most, their labours, or their sufferings. What we know for certain, is, that they have gained for them a double crown in heaven; they carried in fact a double cross, whereas only one is necessary to obtain the reward. O how edifying it is to behold men, laden with infirmities, toiling as if they possessed vigorous health, and spending themselves in the service of their neighbour, without allowing calumnies, persecutions, or trials of any kind to stop them! How edifying to see them forget their own sufferings, and sacrifice their lives, to help others in their necessities. Assuredly, no better evidence can be given of the perfection of charity. It is true, indeed, that it requires this; for, according to St. Thomas, it is necessary for its excellence, that we prefer the spiritual life of our brethren to our corporal life, and their consolation to our repose, however great may be our own need of it.

Now I think I have sufficiently proved that the charity of our illustrious father was of this kind. It was all the more considerate and compas-

sionate, from his own experience of suffering. It is very useful for those who have the duty of consoling others, to have been themselves afflicted. It is for this reason, says the apostle, that Jesus Christ chose to experience our trials; for "we have not a priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, for He was tempted in all things like us, excepting sin." "Tentatum per omnia, pro similitudine absque peccato." Knowing the wants of the sick, therefore, from his own experience, the father frequently visited them, consoled them with joyous words, was careful that they wanted for nothing, and carried his solicitude so far, as to procure for them delicacies, that he thought they would like. But he was also very careful to keep them in conformity to the Divine will, requiring of them that they should never complain of anything.

Having one day gone to visit one of our fathers, an indefatigable labourer, and seeing him troubled at the inactivity caused by his state of sickness, he said to him: "We gain more by resigning ourselves to the will of God for a month, than by labouring for Him a whole year." This wise answer comforted the sick man, and with good reason; for when God sends sickness to a Religious, he can do nothing more pleasing to the Divine Majesty than bear it patiently. As for the merit, it is greater in this submission than in works of zeal, because it is more pure and detached from self-will, which easily insinuates itself into these last. This wise doctrine of

conformity, which Father Balthasar preached to others, he practised himself to admiration; it was his consolation in all his troubles. These words, written in the journal of his conscience, are a proof of it: "A sick man must say to his soul: However painful this fever may be, I wish to have it, as long as it shall please God." With sentiments like these, we feel sure that he had grace to console and encourage others, and, in fact, he did it always successfully, either by his letters or his words.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FATHER BALTHASAR IS MADE RECTOR OF THE COLLEGE AT SALAMANCA—HE WARNS HIS RELIGIOUS AGAINST THE DANGERS OF STUDY, AND EFFICACIOUSLY ANIMATES THEM TO FERVOUR.

The father had just been appointed Provincial of Toledo, when he had, at Val d'Olet, the illness of which we have spoken; but it had so much weakened him that this office was considered too heavy; he was therefore sent to Salamanca as rector. His exhaustion was extreme, yet he diminished in nothing the severity with which he usually treated his body, which prevented his recovering his strength, and even exposed him to a relapse, under which he must certainly have given way. The provincial, hearing how the case

stood, determined to put bounds to his austerities, by giving him a moderator. He charged Father Marc, a religious of great prudence, to regulate him in everything regarding his corporal life. The care of this father was not useless: for he put a stop to fasts, abstinence, and prolonged watches: but he could not prevent his austere rector from labouring much more than his strength permitted.

He also greatly benefited his Religious by the wisdom of his government, and especially by his powerful exhortations. He applied himself particularly, to hinder studies from being an obstacle to perfection, and he succeeded so well, that there soon reigned in the college the fervour of a noviciate. What means did he make use of for this end? This is what we are going to make known.

"1st. He endeavoured to convince their minds by some striking truths, such, for instance, as; science and virtue are the two trees planted by God in the earthly paradise; they are the two bright luminaries created by Him to give light to the world, one large, the other smaller; they are the double garments with which the valiant woman clothes her domestics, to keep them from the winter cold; they are the two gifts of the Spirit of God, which Eliseus asked of his master, when he was going up to heaven; they are the two Testaments, the old and the new, the law and grace; they are the two wheels of the mystical chariot which bore the spirit of life; they are the two sisters, Martha and Mary, living in strict

union under the same roof, one requiring the aid of the other. In fact, the mind requires science to know many useful things, and science in its turn has need of the mind to understand the things of God; but that is not the only service that virtue gives to learning, it gives it authority; for, as St. Gregory has said, as the contemptible life of a learned man, makes teaching despised, so the doctrine of a saint shares in the honour his holy life draws upon him. And has not the apostle made use of these remarkable words: 'The letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth.' 'Littera occidit, spiritus autem vivificat.' (2 Cor. iii. 6.) 'Science puffs up, but charity edifieth.' 'Scientia inflat, charitas autem ædificat.' (1 Cor. viii. 1.) 'Woe to learning,' cried out St. Augustin, 'unless charity direct it. Learning is to be loved,' he added, 'but charity is preferable.' And David said to God: 'Teach me goodness, and discipline, and learning.' 'Bonitatem, et disciplinam, et scientiam doce me.' (Ps. cxviii. 66.) But virtue does not only give authority to learning, it also gives it efficaciousness. Teaching does not easily convince when it is only shown in theory; it is practice that renders it persuasive. For this reason the apostle said to Timothy: 'Attend both to virtue and learning; by doing this, you will obtain your own salvation, and that of your hearers.' 'Attende tibi et doctrinæ—Hoc enim faciens, et te ipsum salvum facies et eos qui te audiunt.' " (1 Tim. iv. 16.)

From these truths Father Balthasar drew

another, on which he insisted strongly; it is, that science is so much the more clear, as the man who studies is more virtuous. "Who does not know," said he, "that learning is a gift of God? Now, He communicates His gifts with greater willingness, in proportion to the purity of conscience of those who ask. A Religious, then, who wishes to become learned, must apply himself more to avoid sin, than to study learned authors, more to the correction of his defects, than to the reading of many books, for, as Cassian teaches, it is purity of life, which enables us to see clearly what regards God, and the eyes which see God easily see all the rest."

The wise director took no less pains to inspire his Religious with zeal for prayer, as a powerful means of acquiring knowledge. He knew this by experience; but his modesty not allowing him to speak of himself, he cited to them the example of the Abbot Theodore, related by Cassian. "This holy man," says his historian, "had become very learned, more by purifying his heart, than by reading many books, and his great means of study was prayer." The following fact will prove it. Wishing, one day, to understand a profound text of Scripture, he began to study it with the greatest attention, without, however, succeeding; he then had recourse to prayer, and immediately obtained the light he needed. Who would believe that mortification is also a means of becoming learned? This was, however, what Father Balthasar taught his hearers. "Make a trial of it," he said to

them, "especially in what regards your studies, and you will find that nothing is more calculated to overcome difficulties. By this means, first, you will triumph over the enemy, who assaults you during this exercise, and over the desire of thinking about it when it is not the time; for example, during prayer, examen, and other duties. All this is troublesome, but we cannot follow Jesus Christ without carrying our cross. By this means, secondly, you will do violence to pride, which is wounded by the questions of the professor, and the arguments of your fellow-students. By mortification, thirdly, you will confine yourself to those studies which are marked out for you, preferring what is useful, to the desires of curiosity. By this, fourthly, you will sacrifice your own ideas to those of your master, studying this subject and not another; in this book, and not in any other. Such was the advice of St. Augustin, when he said: 'It is not a small gift in a disciple, to know how to yield to the advice of his master. He has the eyes of knowledge, the pupil should have those of credulity.' It is, then, a pure illusion, and an act of great ignorance, to think we practise obedience, by accomplishing the precept in our own way, and not in that of our superior. By mortification, fifthly, you will not make greater use of erudition than religious modesty allows; you will teach indifferently whatever is appointed for you, without noticing your repugnances. Sxthly, you will be always ready to give up your studies, when your superiors shall judge it expe-

dient, to go whithersoever they may send you, to accept without choice any office imposed on you by obedience."

"If you wish," said he, "to fulfil your spiritual and literary duties in peace of soul, have nothing in view but the sole will of God, whose requirements are perfectly consistent with each other, instead of being opposed. It is a great thing to know theology well; but what better fruit can we draw from it, than to learn to regulate our lives in accordance with it in all things? Do you feel agitated by too great a desire of knowledge? resist this temptation, saying to yourselves, 'I leave it to God to regulate my studies, both as to the time and the subject: if He desires I should fly, it is for Him to give me wings; lights gained contrary to His will, would be of no use to me: this would not be learning, but rather ignorance.' 'Let us willingly consent,' says St. Augustin, 'to be ignorant of what God does not wish us to know. It ought to be sufficient for us to know that such is His will, to make us cheerfully resign ourselves to it.'" (Præf. in Ps. vi.)

2ndly. Not satisfied with exhorting his Religious by word of mouth, not to separate the interior spirit from the study of sciences, he gave them some written instructions, from which I will make extracts for the benefit of my readers. "The life of students," he said, "is in its nature very peaceful, and if they take a little pains to regulate it well, they may learn much without difficulty, and without diminution of their fervour; if it be

otherwise, the fault is assuredly their own; a deplorable fault from which I wish to preserve them, and which they will undoubtedly avoid by following the advice I am going to give them. They should, in the first place, abstain from all anxiety concerning their studies, otherwise they will be hurried in performing the other works of obedience, and every one knows that too great eagerness, besides preventing us from doing things well, renders the heart unfit for prayer.

"Secondly, They should give religion the first place in their esteem; it is in truth worth much more than learning, which, without it, does more harm than good. If such be their conviction, they will, before all things, occupy themselves with their spiritual exercises, and will perform them with the requisite exactness and perfection. Their advancement will not in any way be injured by it; 'For,' as S. Bonaventure has said, 'knowledge, which is neglected for the acquisition of virtue, is much more easily gained afterwards.' 'Scientia quæ pro virtute despicitur, per virtutem postmodum melius invenitur.' (Specul. Discipl. ch. vii.)

"They must, thirdly, study with a pure intention, for, besides the precept of the Gospel, the spirit of their state requires it. Seculars, in their studies, seek renown, honours, riches, and other temporal goods; but Religious should know the true value of these shadows, and aim at science only to enable them to procure the greater glory of God. Can there be an end more noble or excellent? The two real means of keeping the

intention pure, are to offer to God frequently the labour of study, and never to begin without having invoked, on our knees, the assistance of the Holy Ghost.

"4thly. They should add to the prescribed exercises those required by their personal necessities. An hour of prayer is sufficient for a student, but it may happen that this is not enough for a proud or sensual man; each one, then, should pray as much as is necessary for the correction of his faults, for, before all things, we must aim at becoming perfect.

"They should, fifthly, lose nothing of their first fervour, that they may not draw upon themselves the severe reproof of our Lord to the angel of Ephesus: 'I have something against you, because you have fallen off from your first fervour.' This reproach would be terrifying, but how much more so would it be, if, instead of something, he had many things to find fault with; for example, frequent and habitual irregularities?

"They must, sixthly, cherish fraternal charity, and for this purpose avoid most carefully these six pernicious defects; particular friendships, criticisms of their masters, disputes contrary to their opinions, hints unfavourable to their capacity, indifference towards them, especially when openly shown, and that party spirit which makes them prefer and exalt one professor, to the detriment of the others.

"Lastly, when a student has done all in his power to succeed in his studies, let him leave to

Providence the care of blessing his efforts, preserving the peace of his heart, even should his success not be answerable to his hopes. This resignation will not be difficult to him if in his studies he seek God alone."

To these wise counsels, the holy rector added a watchfulness that ensured their fulfilment; nothing escaped his vigilant solicitude. All, masters and disciples, were obliged to follow their rules, practise faithfully their spiritual exercises, and give to study the time prescribed by obedience, and no infraction was allowed to go unpunished. He was also very careful to keep up their strength, providing them with abundant and wholesome food, and agreeable recreations, sending them to breathe the country air on recreation days. He required of them a monthly manifestation of conscience, addressed them frequent exhortations, spoke to them privately concerning their individual necessities, excited their zeal for devotion as well as study, allowing them to perceive his good opinion, and the esteem he had of their labours. Lastly, he showed himself so completely a father in every way, that he was an object of love and veneration to his Religious. There was not one, therefore, who did not have recourse to him in his necessities, opening his interior with the fullest confidence. The following is an example, which I have on good authority.

One of the Religious, being attacked in the night by a violent temptation to despair, ran to the father's room, and seizing him by the arm,

caused him to awake in considerable alarm; the father restrained himself, however, and asked him in a calm and tranquil tone who he was? The young man, troubled by the temptation, did not answer, and it was not without difficulty that he was induced at last to give his name. "Ah, it is you, my son," replied the father, "but what brings you to me at this late hour?" "I am dying, father," the young man answered, "and I am going straight to hell." At these words, the holy rector, moved with compassion, made him sit down, and had a very long conversation with him, but so powerful, that it restored confidence and peace to this poor afflicted soul.

Never, perhaps, was there witnessed, in any college of the Society, fervour equal to that which reigned at Salamanca, under this wise government, (the image of the noviciate of Métine,) without the slightest detriment to studies. The following fact will prove it.

The Procurator of the Japan Islands, being come to the college, authorised by the Father General to enlist some labourers for this perilous mission; all the young Religious offered their services with holy emulation, thinking nothing of the dangers to be run, or the sacrifices to be made. Happily the number had been fixed by the General, or the college would have been left empty. As all could not be chosen, each one put forward his claims to be preferred. "I am the oldest," said one; "I am the strongest," said another; "It is my attraction," said a third; "It

would suit my health," said a fourth; "I am not afraid of the sea," another said, "it does me good rather than harm." The superiors put an end to this touching contest. Five were chosen, and hopes were given to the others, that their desires might be fulfilled later. At once they were all at peace, like true children of obedience.

CHAPTER XXX.

REMARKABLE EXAMPLES, FURNISHED BY TWO OF FATHER BALTHASAR'S DISCIPLES.

Nothing proves more clearly the science and virtue of a director, than the holy life of his disciples. I will select two from a great number, whose perfection was a great honour to the able and pious rector. Those I shall speak of, were two young scholastics, one named John Ortuni, the other Francis of Cardona. What I shall say may be unhesitatingly believed; for I shall only copy the account given of them by Father Oiedo, their master, whose virtues are a guarantee of his sincerity. I relate these examples with the more pleasure, because, besides the glory derived from them by Father Balthasar, they may be very useful to others in the same state.

Brother John Ortuni was twenty years of age when he entered the noviciate at Métine, then

conducted by Father Balthasar. His life was so exemplary, that after his death, the father was able to say of him, in a public discourse, at which I was present: "I have never read anything in the lives of the Fathers of the Desert more beautiful or more to be admired, than what I have seen in this excellent brother." His sanctity increased, however, at Salamanca, whither he was sent for his course of philosophy, when Father Balthasar was the rector. It was during this time that Father Oiedo, who was there also, studied his conduct, and wrote his panegyric. Ortuni, whose talents were of a high order, applied most diligently to study, but without in any way neglecting the practice of virtues, and his conduct clearly proved that he valued devotion much more highly than learning; he was especially remarkable for obedience, and his modest, peaceful, and recollected air showed him to have a truly mortified spirit. Father Rodrigue, whom the rector had entrusted with the care of the scholastics, having quickly perceived the superior virtue of young Ortuni, determined to try him more than the others. This Religious was a very holy man, but taciturn in character, severe, austere, and obedient to heroism; we can imagine, therefore, the trials to which he put him, as well as Brother Francis of Cardona, his fellow scholastic. He waited for them every day when they left their class, for a long course of time, and sent them to the kitchen, to perform the lowest offices. They might have shown surprise that this task was reserved for them; they might have

complained to the father rector, who wished them to be left at liberty at this time, that they might repeat what they had just heard; but such thoughts never entered their minds; happy to have the opportunity of mortifying themselves, and practising obedience, they went whither they were sent, not only without reluctance, but more joyously than they went to the professor's lectures.

One winter evening, when a bitter north wind was blowing, and the snow falling in thick flakes, Father Rodrigue, meeting Ortuni in the court, said to him, "Stay here till I come back, I have an order to give you." He then passed on, and becoming engaged with business, forgot to return. Ortuni, notwithstanding the severity of the cold, had remained in the place, as if nailed to it by obedience. Towards nine o'clock, the refectorian, who had not seen him either at the first or second table, went to the father rector, and told him what he had observed. He was sought all over the house, but in vain. Some one having asked Father Rodrigue if he knew where he was, he replied that he did not. After searching the whole college, he was at last found in the court covered with snow, and half dead with cold. The father rector, who came up at the time, asked him what he was doing there in such weather? "Father Rodrigue," he quietly replied, "told me to wait until he came back, and I was waiting for him." All were utterly astonished at such a mark of obedience, which he had not, however, fully

accomplished, for we may well believe that, had he not been sought for, he would have remained there the whole night.

In this same court were boxes filled with newly planted flowers, which were in danger of withering as the season was extremely dry. Father minister, to prevent this, gave them into the care of the scholastics, telling each of them to water three times a day, the plant of which he had the charge. The weather changed, and one week was very rainy, but Brother Ortuni did not omit to give the three waterings prescribed to his flowers. His fellow students, greatly edified by this simplicity, did not interfere with him. One of the oldest Religious, surprised at this, said to him: "Is not this rain sufficient to water your flowers?" "It is my office, father," the holy young man replied, "and I was not told to give it up when rain came." The Religious said no more, and went away full of admiration at such perfection of obedience in a novice; but soon after he witnessed another action still more surprising.

A priest was at one time following the course of philosophy with the scholastics. He was a man of great virtue, but so destitute of memory, that he forgot the lesson as soon as he had heard it. The professor charged Brother Ortuni to repeat it to him and help him to understand it. The good brother fulfilled the commission with the greatest zeal, repeating the same things over and over again, answering one question ten times, without giving the smallest sign of weariness or impa-

tience, though he clearly saw that his labour was useless. When the professor asked him what success he had had with his pupil, instead of stating the real case, to get rid of so troublesome a task, he quietly answered: "He does what he can; I must do justice to his good will." The professor, believing by this answer that his repetitions were not useless, allowed him to continue them for a considerable time, without his patience even in the least giving way.

I cannot omit another no less touching proof of his obedience. The scholastics used often to sit on stones at the church door to study their lessons. The father rector, finding them there one day in autumn, said to them: "In mensibus erratis, super lapidem non sedeatis." It was said in jest, but Brother Ortuni took it seriously, and did not venture to sit down on these seats for several months. When May arrived, his companions seeing him sit down again, thought there was some mystery in it, and asked for an explanation. "It is very simple," he replied, "father rector forbade us to sit on these stones during those months, the names of which contain the letter R, therefore I could not do it until now, but in the present month the order ceases."

If his obedience was admirable, so also was his patience, and, in fact, were all his virtues. His last illness gave the final proof of them. He had an ulcer which made him suffer severely; but his love for suffering prevented his making it known, and the disease increased so much that it was

necessary to make most painful incisions; the flesh had to be cut very deeply. The young Religious submitted without showing the least sign of suffering, without the smallest complaint. His pain was not diminished by this operation, but so great was his patience, that those who visited him would not have known what he endured. His countenance was peaceful and smiling, and he answered those who inquired how he was: "I am in God's hands; may His most just and most holy will be accomplished in me; neither sufferings nor death can make me fear, because they come from Him." In these holy dispositions he died in the flower of his age.

The second example is no less remarkable. Francis of Cardona, son of the Duke of Cardona, after having been rector of the university of Salamanca, entered while yet young into the Society. He performed his noviciate under Father Balthasar, at Métine, and studied philosophy and theology with Brother Ortuni, at the college of Salamanca, when the same father was rector. From his commencement, it was easy to see what he would become. His zeal for perfection was admirable, and his heart was so deeply attached to the Society, that he was often heard to say, that everything done in it seemed to have been instituted for him. The sacrifices he had made to God procured for him during his exercises, such sweet peace and consolation that Dr. Oiedo, his friend, to whom he made them known, could not believe what he said to him. Francis was obliged

to make a solemn asseveration to convince him, and added, "Yes, my friend, I am happy, and I feel all my happiness. The kind of life I lead is that which suits me, and I have not the least doubt that God caused me to embrace it, for my spiritual advancement, and the salvation of my soul. That is so clear to me, that I would not exchange it for all the dignities of the world, nor even for the pontificate." Oiedo, whom grace had long been urging to the same step, was so touched by what he said, that he gave up and entered the noviciate. Francis had scarcely received the holy habit, than the office of refectorian was given him; it was an unspeakable happiness to him. He had never before experienced such fervour, and he was seen sweeping on his knees, this first scene of his religious labours, and kissing the floor, which he watered with his tears. This greatly edified his fellow novices, and penetrated them with devotion.

He soon surpassed them all in mortification and self-denial. Through his desire of acquiring profound humility, he carefully concealed what would make him honourable in the eyes of men, and embraced with joy all that could render him contemptible; but what was most admirable in this, was, that through superhuman prudence he knew how to humble himself without appearing humble, seeming to act as he did, through absence of mind, or weakness, rather than through virtue. Let us give some examples.

Through his love of mortification, nothing

pleased him more than to serve in the kitchen, and this taste, which he acquired as a novice, lasted all his life. That he might give himself more completely to it, he never failed on festivals and recreation days, to ask for this office as a favour, and the reason he gave for his request was another act of humility. I should say, indeed, the motive was more humbling than the practice itself. "I acquired in the world," he used to say, "great skill in this line, and I should like to make use of my knowledge in preparing a good dish for God's servants."

The care of animals was also a task he sought after, and in which he said he was very skilful. The superior did not believe it, of course; but he willingly gave him this commission to please him. This gave rise to a very edifying incident. A father from a distant college arrived one day on a horse in such wretched condition, that it seemed likely to die. Francis, being accidentally at hand, saw at once what he could gain on this occasion: he begged father minister to entrust it to him, saying, he should be able to cure it. I do not know what confidence the father had in his abilities, but he at length yielded to him. The humble novice then dressed the horse's wounds, and covered it with plasters. He hired a meadow outside the town, where he could pasture at liberty, and asked leave to take him to it. Having obtained it with some difficulty, he put on a shabby hat and worn out cloak, threw a rope over the horse's head, and went out, leading

him along. He could have taken him through unfrequented streets, but he preferred to go through the town, and chose his route so as to pass the gates of the university, and at an hour when the students leaving their schools would be in his way. I leave it to be imagined what surprise these young men felt, when they saw a man of such distinguished birth, and formerly the rector of the university, performing such a task. But what must still more have astonished them was to see him walk with his head erect, a smile on his lips, and something of an air of triumph in his countenance. The rumour of this event spread all over the town, and caused various commentaries. Some praised this action, others blamed it; many laughed at it. The father rector, hearing of it, sent for the novice on his return, and reproved him for going through the town instead of the suburbs. He, who was most skilful in concealing his humility, accused himself of it as a fault, saying that the way through the suburbs was longer, and that his laziness was benefited by taking the other. The following circumstance is still more humbling. One day, when preaching in the refectory, according to custom, he purposely spoke of a point that was controverted in the life of the saint, whose panegyric he was pronouncing, and expressed himself as follows: "I have consulted on this matter two editions of the work entitled 'Flos Sanctorum,' and I found they did not agree; but if I must give my opinion, I adopt that given in the Augs-

burg edition, because the type is clearer and more easy to read." This reason caused general laughter, which seemed to surprise the orator, who to play his part better, took no notice of what he had said, letting his hearers believe that his thought agreed with his words. One of them actually did believe it, through the permission of Divine Providence, to carry out the humble intention of His servant. Persuaded that this holy man was a simpleton, he not only laughed at this incident, but continued to make game of him on all occasions, and even in his presence. This was to Francis a reason for seeking his society, for showing him greater esteem, and rendering him services on all occasions. When he waited at table, the best portion he could find was for his persecutor. When they went into the country, he sought the company of this brother; in ordinary recreations he never failed to be with him. The professor having noticed it, asked him privately why he showed greater friendship for this companion than for the others? Francis seemed embarrassed by this question, which he did not expect; and not wishing to betray his secret, he tried to answer evasively; but as the professor insisted, he gave this reply:

"Your reverence and my brethren treat me honourably, as if I were something, which is no advantage to me. This one alone knows me, and does me justice by laughing at me, and turning to ridicule what I do and say. As this good brother labours thus for my interest, is it not natu-

ral that I should prefer his company to that of the others?" The professor was silent with astonishment at the sight of such wonderful humility.

The same father soon had another, and a better opportunity of appreciating it. Being appointed by the father rector, to preach the Lent in a neighbouring village, his virtuous disciple was given him as companion, with the commission to teach catechism to the children. His manner of doing it awakened such interest, that the whole parish came to be present at it, and with the greatest profit. Grateful for the good the holy man had done, they asked to have him the Lent following, and the favour was granted. Some of his fellow students having gone several times to hear him, began to entertain very different ideas concerning him; for though they greatly respected his virtue, they had considered him a man of very ordinary abilities. Undeceived on this subject, they began to treat him with great deference, and even allowed some words to escape them in his presence, praising his capacity. They could not give him greater pain: and he did everything he could to put a stop to it; he no longer spoke at recreation, except of his talents for cookery and agriculture, offering to give his brethren lessons in them; but this did not prevent them from speaking of his remarkable talents. Greatly distressed at being found out, and intent upon putting an end to these praises, he earnestly begged father rector to release him from a mis-

sion which was so injurious to him, and the father, to satisfy him, yielded to his wishes.

It may perhaps be asked here, whether these acts were premeditated; for even in humbling ourselves, we do not always lose the consciousness of merit. I answer, that no effort was required for Francis to humble himself, this virtue had become so natural to him. The following fact will prove it. He had agreed with one of his brothers, that they would mutually admonish each other of their faults. The other, in consequence of this agreement, asked him from time to time what he had remarked; but Francis had never observed anything. At first he got out of it by accusing himself of negligence, and promising to amend; but at last he was obliged to give the true answer: "I am," he said, "so taken up with my own faults that I do not perceive those of others." He was never heard to speak ill of any of his companions; on the contrary, full of esteem for all, he was always ready to excuse them, to wait upon them, and console them with the most tender charity. In sickness, they could not have a more intelligent or faithful nurse. The skilful attention he paid them could not be surpassed; but when it came to be his turn to be waited on by others, it was done in the worst possible way, God so ordering it to complete his sanctification.

I cannot pass over this circumstance in silence. He was seized with a tertian fever, when the brother infirmarian was absent, and the father rector selected as his nurse, a novice lately arrived

from the country, who was not at all accustomed to the employment. The poor sick man paid the cost of his apprenticeship; for, through his want of experience, the fever changed its character, and became very dangerous. To give an idea of his awkwardness, I will mention one single incident, well calculated to show the heroic patience of the sufferer. One day, when Francis had some medicine to take, (it was Saturday,) his unskilful nurse forgot to make some broth for him at the proper time, and when the patient asked for it, he ran to the kitchen, threw into a saucepan where vegetables were boiling for the community, half a chicken, which he took out in five minutes, and put away; then, filling a cup with this vegetable water, he took it to Brother Francis. Having tasted this extraordinary broth, he thought it more prudent not to take it, and did not ask for anything else, for fear of some new mistake. The time being come for taking food, which his exhaustion caused him to stand in great need of, he made known his wants, and the infirmarian hurried off to fetch him the morsel of chicken which had only just been dipped into the boiling water of the saucepan. It was, of course, uneatable; and the sick man could do nothing with it, notwithstanding the persuasions of the wise infirmarian, who, convinced he was not hungry, offered him nothing else. However, Francis never complained, said not a word, nor allowed the least sign of impatience to escape him; but when he saw that the poor man con-

tinued the same method of treatment, a scruple of conscience obliged him to make known his sorrowful condition.

Persuaded that his infirmarian was hastening his death, he examined whether he ought to die without saying anything, or speak to prolong his life; but he could not solve this difficulty. It then occurred to him to send for Father Gonzalez, whom he knew to be very severe towards himself, and to consult him on the subject. Having summoned him to his bedside, he told him in confidence what the question was, and asked which was the more perfect, to die without speaking, or to speak in order to live; adding, that in this as in all other things, he wished to choose that which was best. Father Gonzalez, like a prudent director, thought it best first to try his patience, and told him to be silent, and abandon himself into God's hands, that he might not lose the fruit to be gained from so glorious a sacrifice. He then left him, but only to go to the father rector, whom he informed of the affair, and who speedily found a remedy.

He who refuses His grace to the proud, poured it abundantly on this His humble and mortified servant: He heaped upon him the choicest favours, especially in his communions, during which he received extraordinary graces; but God's generosity did not end here. In his second year of theology, Francis was promoted to the priesthood, contrary to custom, and almost in spite of himself; and father provincial, who knew his vir-

tue and capacity, ordered him to hear confessions. The holy man, in this circumstance, did not forget his humble opinion of himself, for he asked and obtained that his faculties should be restricted to penitents of the lowest class in society. Such self-denial could not fail to be pleasing to God; He therefore granted the most abundant blessings to his ministry. When he had finished his studies, he was sent by superiors to Villa Garcia to make his third probation, and he died during the year, loaded with virtues and merits, as we shall show later.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ENDEAVOURS OF FATHER BALTHASAR TO PROCURE THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE PROFESSORS IN HIS COLLEGE—GOD SENDS TO ASSIST HIM A RELIGIOUS OF EMINENT VIRTUE, FATHER FRANCIS RIBEIRA.

Though, as we have seen, Father Balthasar neglected nothing for the sanctification of the scholastics, he laboured with even more zeal for the perfection of the professors, because on their virtue greatly depends that of their disciples. Who does not know that pupils, full of esteem and affection for their masters, naturally imitate them, thinking they cannot do better than resemble men of whom they have the highest opinion? The wise rector, fully persuaded of this truth, employed

all the strength of his zeal, in making the professors and preachers truly spiritual men. "It is by the holiness of your life," he used to say to them, "that you will gain for your teaching, the esteem and confidence of your hearers." He cited on this subject, the words of St. Peter Chrysologus: "The authority of doctrine depends greatly on the life of the preacher. If he perform well what he teaches, he will easily render his hearers docile." And these other words of St. Bernard: "If the life of a preacher be despised, his sermons will be little valued." We must then labour at our own sanctification if we wish to contribute to that of others. Is it not lamentable that those who teach, fill their memory with truths, and leave their heart empty of virtues: that they give all to others, and leave nothing for themselves. This is folly; for true charity begins with oneself. "Drink first of the water of your well," says Solomon, in the Book of Proverbs, "you may then let it run off, for the good of others."

"Learned men who are without the interior spirit," he also said, "are useless, notwithstanding their learning; and the pride which reigns in them, makes them the scourge of their orders, and of the Church of God. If I were the master to dispose of all Religious of this description, I would send them to the kitchen, instead of making professors and preachers of them." As for those who united prayer with study, he highly esteemed them, treated them with every deference, and

rendered them all possible services, considering them the pillars of the Church and of the Society.

As he had formed the plan of establishing a chair of Holy Scripture—a science so important to theologians, as theology is founded upon it—he wished it to be occupied by a man who should unite sanctity with eminent learning. God granted his desire, by giving him Father Francis Ribeira, formerly his novice at Métine, and who united great virtue with profound erudition. My readers will gain edification from becoming acquainted with him, and to praise him, is also to praise the master who formed him in the noviciate. Francis, after being a secular professor in the seminary at Salamanca, returned to his native town, where he wholly applied himself to the study of the sacred writings, which a knowledge of the Eastern languages made easy to him. Father Martin Guttierez, his former confessor, passing through, went to pay him a visit of friendship, the result of which clearly proved that it had been arranged by Divine Providence. After speaking of various things, Ribeira said to his visitor: "I have a plan of going to live in a house near a chapel of the Blessed Virgin that I am very fond of; I will go to preach in the surrounding villages on Sundays and festivals, and during the week study the sacred writings. What do you think of this kind of life, father? Do you approve of it?" "I see nothing to find fault with in it," answered the father, "except, that in giving much to God, you keep the best thing you have,

that is, your own will." These words were a ray of light to Ribeira, and grace speaking at the same time to his heart, he cried out: "You are right; by entering into your Society, I shall find the same ministry and the same studies, without self-will, as I shall devote myself to them through obedience. Very well, I will enter." Several days after, he went to the college of Salamanca, where he was received into the Society by Father Guttierez himself, who sent him to the noviciate at Métine. Any one who is desirous to know what he afterwards became, has only to read what Father Balthasar has written concerning him in the life of St. Teresa, Book I., ch. 2. Francis Ribeira was a man of great mortification and prayer, exceedingly eloquent and very skilful in the direction of souls.

By this description, we may judge of the satisfaction Father Balthasar felt in receiving such a professor of Holy Scripture. Besides the advantage the college reaped from his eminent talents, he was for all the inmates, a subject of great edification. The reader will form an idea of this, from the sketch I am going to give of his conduct. Thanks to the able direction of Father Balthasar, he had imbibed the spirit of the Society, as if he had been brought up in it from childhood, and he distinguished himself by the perfection of his virtues, especially of obedience, of which he was a most finished model throughout his life. Neither his studies or his other occupations, ever prevented his exactly complying with the rules. His weak

constitution obliging him to drink from time to time during the day, he never did it without the permission of his superior. He asked it also, for reading or answering a letter, and he never sent off any answer without first submitting it to the father rector. If after this, he thought it expedient to make any alteration, he submitted it again to authority, before he sent it away. Exemplary as he was in regularity, he was no less so in modesty, in the regulation of his exterior, in moderation in all things, and above all in humility. He did nothing of importance without asking advice, even from the least capable. No Religious was so mild and affable as he in conversation. His fervour was not like that of young novices, which boils over like milk before a great fire, and makes much noise in doing so; it was serious, solid, and tranquil; and therefore much less changeable, and more edifying. If I am asked what was his secret for acquiring such exalted virtues, I answer, that it was the practice of prayer, in which he followed the example of his holy Master. Like Him, in effect, he consecrated to this powerful means of perfection, several hours of the day and night. It was also his resource for obtaining light to understand the Holy Scriptures, and he always found in it that which he had sought in vain elsewhere. The following fact will bear witness to what I have just said. This holy man, preaching once on a festival day, one of his hearers, whose testimony may be believed, saw behind him a great light, and in this light Jesus

Christ Who was beholding him with complacency, and stretching His arms over his head, as if to show that He was assisting and protecting him. In the course of the sermon, the father having said that there is not in the Holy Scriptures a word, that is not full of mysterious truth, and that all proceed from the mouth of Him Who is the supreme truth, the person, of whom I speak, heard Jesus Christ say to her, in a low voice: "Behold a preacher who explains the true meaning of My words. I delight in enlightening him regarding the truths they contain, because he knows how to appreciate and esteem their value. It has cost Me no less a price than My Blood, to enable men to enjoy it. It is a great blessing for you to have met with such a confessor. Believe what he shall say to you, for I willingly impart to him My Spirit, and you will learn from him how to fulfil My supreme will." When this revelation was communicated to me by the person who had received it, I easily believed that it came from God, because of its conformity with the qualities that I admired in this holy man. God took him from us too soon; but we had at least the consolation of seeing him die, like a predestined soul: it pleased God, indeed, to give us the assurance of it, three days after his death. The person of whom I have just spoken, having had a rapture after Communion, saw him in heaven, clothed with great glory, and she knew from himself that he had only spent one hour in purgatory, and in a light degree of suffering. I

could say much more, in praise of this excellent father, but having only mentioned him for the sake of his master, I think I have gone far enough.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ABUNDANT BLESSINGS SHOWERED BY GOD ON HIS MINISTRY—THE LIGHTS GOD GIVES HIM RESEMBLE THE GIFT OF PROPHECY.

Through his zeal for the salvation of souls, Father Balthasar sought out for his college, the best preachers, both for the sake of the numerous students of the university, and for the nobility and people of the town. Father John Ramirez being then the most celebrated preacher in the Society, he contrived so well, that superiors sent him to occupy his pulpit. His hopes were not deceived, for this apostolic man moved hearts strongly. The students, and even the masters, touched by these discourses, came in crowds to ask to make the exercises of St. Ignatius, and several, renouncing the world, entered the Society. Among these were Francis d'Avila, of whom I have spoken in the fifteenth chapter, and a certain doctor, Augustin de Mendiolas, professor of philosophy in the university, whose entrance was accompanied with some incidents so curious, that I cannot pass them over.

For nearly ten years, Almighty God had been speaking to the heart of this doctor, and leading him to enter the Society, but he constantly deferred following his vocation, notwithstanding the interior admonitions he felt, and all that Father Balthasar said to induce him to follow it. His excuse was, that his parents wanted means, and he thought he ought to place them in a more wealthy condition, and to procure this, he sought ecclesiastical benefices. Our Lord, to undeceive him, sent him an illness, which brought him to the gates of death; his eyes were then opened, and coming to himself, he reproached himself bitterly for his long resistance to the grace of his vocation. One day, when he felt worse than usual, oppressed with fear and remorse, he fixed his eyes, full of tears, on his crucifix, and asked pardon of our Lord. Our Blessed Saviour then spoke through His image, and said to him: "You will soon be better, but do not any longer delay to go whither My voice calls you. You must join My Society." This voice made him feel great confusion at first for his negligence, but afterwards he felt greatly consoled and full of fervour, insomuch that, that very day, he sent to ask Father Balthasar most earnestly, for his admission. Struck with the change wrought in him by the hand of God, Father Balthasar went at once to speak to the provincial in his favour, and sent him word that he was received into the Society. Though his illness was still dangerous, it seemed to yield to the joy this good news gave him, so

that he left his bed and was able to go to the college a few days later, carrying with him the crucifix, through which he had received this grace. His improvement was however a transport of joy rather than a cure, for that very day, the fever seized him again, with so much violence, that he was obliged to go to bed, and died on the twelfth day after his entrance, full of joy and gratitude.

Let us return to Father Balthasar, whose wise direction so greatly benefited, not only his Religious, but a number of other persons who had confidence in him. Among these last I may mention Dom Antonio, afterwards Bishop of Evora, to whom I am indebted for many circumstances regarding the sanctity of this father, of whom he spoke with admiration. Others were Dom Sanca, Bishop of Nentesano, and Dom Christopher Vela, who became later Archbishop of Burgos, on whose word I will relate a fact which seems prophetic. One day, when they were conversing familiarly together, Father Balthasar said to him: "It seems certain to me that God wishes to employ you in His service in an important position: believe what I say to you, and wait for the Divine Will to be made known, which it will be very shortly." Soon afterwards, he was appointed Bishop of the Canary Isles. When he was informed of his nomination, he would not give his consent, until he had consulted Father Balthasar. After having recourse to prayer, the father desired him to accept the dignity without fear; he did so, convinced that the

voice of this holy man was for him the voice of God.

I can give additional proofs of his prophetic lights. There was at Salamanca, a convent of Barefooted Carmelites, whom he patronized greatly, on account of the excellence of their religious order, and the interest he felt in their Mother Teresa. He went to see them from time to time, and heard the confessions of some of them, especially Mother Anne of Jesus, their superior, in order to excite them to walk with zeal in the paths of perfection. Later on, these pious women affirmed that the holy man had received from God the gift of prophecy, and they cited the following facts in proof of it. He foretold one day to the superior, the great toils, difficulties, and tribulations she would have to undergo, in assisting the foundress of her order. As she seemed to doubt of some of the events he predicted, he affirmed that they would happen as he had said. When these predictions began to be realized, this mother having acknowledged it to him, he said with a smile: "I am very glad to see that you begin to believe what God tells you, through the mouth of His servants: hold yourself in expectation of the tribulations that have been foretold to you; they are so certain, that I would sign with my blood, were it necessary, the announcement you have received of them." The fulfilment of these repeated prophecies soon followed, as this holy woman acknowledged afterwards. The sister of one of our fathers had entered this monastery to be a nun.

Continued sickness obliged her to leave, to her great regret, but with the hope of returning in the meantime, she went to another religious house, where she begged Father Balthasar to go and see her. He consented, and said to her, to console her in her grief: "I have taken much pains to know the designs of God upon you, and I have succeeded. He loves you, my child, you may take my word for it; but He does not wish you to be a Barefooted Carmelite; receive this assurance as if you had it from the mouth of one of the angels." These words convinced her at the time, and restored peace to her soul; but, some years later, she entered another monastery of the same order. Her noviciate went on tolerably peacefully, which made her very joyous. However, the mother declared to her towards the end, that they could not admit her for her profession. She asked the reasons; but they either could not or would not give them. She was obliged, however, to leave the house. Her grief was at first acute; but Father Balthasar's prediction, which recurred to her mind, dried up her tears: she determined to live piously in the world, in which she happily succeeded. We will now speak of the efficacy of his zeal with secular persons: this will at the same time give an opportunity of showing the excellence of his charity. A lady of the house of Gusman, wife of the governor of the city, chose him for her confessor, at St. Teresa's instigation. This was a stroke of grace, for in a few weeks a complete

change was wrought in her soul. Until then she had greatly loved vanity, and her fortune allowed her to gratify it; but she left off all her ornaments and began to dress so simply that her husband was surprised, and said playfully: "Who has disfigured my wife in this manner?" But as he was both very pious and sensible, far from disapproving this change, he was delighted to see her give up these follies, to devote her time to the beautifying of her soul. She was able, therefore, to persevere in her pious resolution, until her bonds were broken by the death of her husband. Then, still more free, she undertook a wholly spiritual life, and attained great perfection.

Mary Pimentella, Countess of Mont Real, had so great confidence in this holy man that she did nothing without his advice; she therefore made rapid progress in perfection. Count Henry of Gusman delighted in opening his heart to him, and wished to be in all things directed by him, knowing by experience that what he did under his direction, never injured the peace of his soul. The Marchioness Veladia, who had had him long for confessor at Avila, to the great benefit of her soul, being come to Alba, to visit the Duke of Toledo, inspired him, by all she said of the holy rector, with a great wish to know him, which he made known to his wife and sister. Salamanca being only four miles from their residence, they begged Father Balthasar to pay them a visit, and received him as an angel from heaven. Having had private conversations with him, they con-

ceived the highest esteem for him, and contrived from time to time to enjoy the benefit of speaking to him on spiritual things. These conferences were of so much advantage to them, that they could not cease wondering at the change wrought within them, nor leave off speaking everywhere in his praise. From that time they became much attached to the Society, and greatly contributed to combat certain prejudices against it, which were circulated in the world.

The Marchioness Veladia found means to put her son also in communication with the holy rector, who made a new man of him. Instructed by so able a master, the young marquis regulated his life, so as to unite the practice of perfection with the duties of his state, and of society. He gave much time to prayer, and derived, as he said, from this exercise, besides the fruit peculiar to it, a singular facility in fulfilling his other obligations. Later on, when the father had left Salamanca, he went to see him in his new residence, and remained there a fortnight in retreat, allowing himself to be guided with the humility and obedience of a fervent novice. From this time his progress in the spiritual life was so rapid, that he was spoken of as a saint, which did not however prevent his obtaining the highest employments, and fulfilling them with remarkable ability.

But it was not of his own accord, that this wise rector thus extended his zeal, to sheep, that did not belong to his flock. He followed in this the

instinct of grace, after submitting the case to the authority of the provincial, but in conformity with obedience, and after accomplishing the duties of his state, he was always ready to give his services. We may see this from the following letter, which is too interesting to be kept back. A novice, who had been his penitent, earnestly desired his presence at her profession, and having received a pressing letter from her to this effect, he answered in the following terms: "If it be the will of God that I should witness your consecration to His service, it will be a great consolation to me. When I endeavoured to facilitate your entrance into the convent, it was not to forget you, as the gravedigger forgets a corpse after burying it in the earth. However, as it might happen, that obedience would not allow me to have the pleasure you offer me, I will address you a few words that may be useful. These espousals that you are about to contract, my dear sister, require of you great purity of heart and sanctity; that is the portion and dower that your Spouse expects from you: if you do not possess sanctity you must at least have humility, that confusion may supply what is wanting. If you carry to the altar this holy disposition, it will be for you, as it were, a vessel, that God will fill with the perfume of His love. Ask our Lord that I may be present at your nuptials, if this would promote His service: otherwise I shall remain at Salamanca; for I know that this good Master does

not wish me to love souls, except in accordance with His good pleasure."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SPIRITUAL DOCTRINE OF FATHER BALTHASAR IN OPPOSITION TO THE ERRORS THAT THE "ILLUMINATI" SPREAD ABROAD AT THIS TIME.

It was in 1575 that the heresy of the Illuminati arose in Spain; their language, in spiritual matters, was condemned by the holy inquisition as opposed to the spirit of the Gospel, as well as to the doctrine of the Church and of the saints. On this occasion, the provincial of Cordova, wishing to forewarn his Religious against this novel and pernicious language, induced Father Balthasar to write a treatise on the Catholic idiom of ascetic theology. St. Ignatius, it is true, gifted with the spirit of prophecy, seemed to have foreseen this new error, and sought to guard his children against it, when he wrote at the end of the Book of his Exercises, nine admirable rules for thinking and speaking in a truly Catholic manner, but the wants of the time required a more lengthened development of this teaching, and one more appropriate to the occasion. This made Father Balthasar take pen in hand, and his treatise was perfection. As the heresy which gave rise to it has long ceased to exist, I might pass it over in

silence, but, besides the clear light in which it places ascetic science, it is my duty to produce it to clear this holy man from the calumnies with which he was attacked. We shall see here, as in a mirror, the orthodoxy of his opinions, and of his language in spiritual matters.

TREATISE

ON THE TERMS WHICH SHOULD BE EMPLOYED IN GIVING INSTRUCTION ON ASCETIC SUBJECTS.

As truth lies midway between extremes, moderation is necessary, not only in opinions, but in the manner of giving expression to them. He who speaks on these subjects, should not exalt or exaggerate anything, so as to give the idea that he goes to extremes. Nevertheless, this is done at the present day by new masters in spirituality, and it is important that our Religious should be placed on their guard against this pernicious novelty, otherwise, expressions might escape them which would render them suspected of error. The best method of preventing this misfortune is to place before their eyes the spiritual language approved by the Catholic Church, and employed by the doctors and the saints. This is what I intend to do in this treatise, which has been enjoined me by obedience.

SECTION I.

ON PRAYER.

It is, without doubt, highly important to recommend the holy exercise of prayer; but vocal prayer must also be spoken of, for fear we may give occasion to our hearers to think it useless, and that they can do without it. In speaking of those who are capable of vocal prayer only, every contemptuous expression must be carefully avoided, which might lead others to think such persons destitute of what we call capacity; we must also carefully avoid giving to understand, that men who do not make mental prayer will inevitably be lost, or that it is impossible for them to attain perfection, through the help of vocal prayer only. We should say when we speak of prayer, that it does not exclude exterior works of virtue, as works of charity, and corporal mortifications; that these practices, on the contrary, are aids to it, and it may be judged from the tepid or fervent exercise of them, whether the prayer be genuine or a delusion. We must also speak of pious pictures, sermons, and spiritual reading, as great helps to prayer, and consequently recommend their use to those who labour to attain perfection, but this, it must be understood, in proportion to their individual capacity. Thus, it is enough for simple persons, and those who are not likely to be occupied in teaching, to read the good books pointed out to them by their confessors as likely to edify them, and give

them the instruction they require. As for the learned, and those who are charged with the instruction and government of others, they must read the works of the saints enlightened by God on spiritual exercises, for, without this study, they would not have the necessary lights for discharging their important duty, or attaining to eminent perfection themselves. It may, perhaps, be said, that experience can supply the place of study, but it is not so; knowledge is required to attain experience, and these two means should render mutual assistance. If directors or preachers may prudently recommend an hour of prayer, it is not so with that of several hours. That should be the subject of private counsel only, and then it should be recommended with great caution. It would be still more imprudent to say to any one, "You will give two hours or three to this exercise." It would be indiscreet also to promise great consolations to these good souls, for the end of prayer does not consist in these satisfactions; what must be sought after in this exercise is, God Himself, His good pleasure, and a holy reformation. On the other hand, we must fearlessly proclaim this Catholic truth, that mental prayer is conformable to the teaching and example of Jesus Christ and of the saints, and that we may give to it as much time as we please, provided it be not to the prejudice of health, charity, the duties of our state, or obedience. Jesus Christ has said that we must pray always. "Oportet semper orare;" (Luke xviii. 1.) and the apostle, that we must pray

without ceasing. "Sine intermissione orate." (1 Thess.) Now, upon this the saints have regulated their lives. There is another truth which may be usefully taught, that God has promised in Holy Scripture to give His favours and consolations to those who seek them with humility, and who love to converse familiarly with Him. It may also be stated in a general manner, that prayer is not suited merely to the perfect, but that the imperfect also may exercise it. Contemplation is the privilege of the first. As for other methods of prayer, all may practise them, with the advice of their directors, and it would be injustice to accuse them of pride.

It is a very holy and a very useful thing to give instructions on prayer; but to do it prudently, he who speaks should consider the condition, talents, and temperament of those who listen to him. "There are men to be found," says St. Gregory the Great, "whose imagination is so lively and unstable, that it renders them incapable of the repose that meditation requires. Before recommending to them this exercise, they must be exercised in vocal prayer, in certain devotions, in acts of virtue. Thus, by little and little, they will change their nature, and become, later on, capable of making mental prayer." (Mor. Book vi. 26.)

In every condition there are persons capable of this exercise, but before we induce them to practise it, we must examine their position. If they be so overwhelmed with business, that they can only give a very short time to prayer, or at several

intervals a reasonable time, they should be satisfied; this will suffice to maintain them in fervour and virtue. What I say of prayer, I say also of the method to be followed; some souls are incapable of sublime considerations, and among those who are capable, some are moved more easily by love, others by fear. Each should choose the subject suited to his attraction. The chief point is, that they direct their meditations to the reformation of their lives, and that they be well convinced that spiritual lights are of little use without practice. They must, then, profit by the graces of prayer and the lights they receive, to make daily fresh progress in virtue, to become more obedient, more meek, more patient, more diligent, more detached from self, more fond of humble occupations, more indifferent to the esteem and affection of creatures, more careful to break their will, and moderate the eagerness of their desires. These instructions are all the more necessary, because many souls, full of the theory of spirituality, neglect their amendment and progress, which is a real delusion; hence it comes, that after several years of prayer, they are no further advanced than they were at the beginning. There is, perhaps, no more fatal delusion for themselves and for others; for themselves, because this blindness often causes these souls to live in peace and tranquillity, free from remorse, and convinced that all goes on well, which makes their conversion impossible; for others, that is for those who, through ignorance, look upon them as spiritual persons, and believe they ought to follow

their advice, and imitate them. When we give an account of our prayer to our director, there is no harm in requiring his secrecy; and it will be better not to say anything about it to others, except to superiors, to whom our conscience should be open, so that we conceal from them nothing of importance. However, as there is no rule without exception, we may, without scruple, allow ourselves such a manifestation, when we believe it would be really useful for the glory of God, or fraternal charity. I must remark, lastly, that the devil, who has a greater horror of prayer than of any other exercise, redoubles his temptations at that time, to make us give it up. If I am asked the reason of his hatred for this practice, I answer, that he hates it more than any other, because it is the most useful for our sanctification, and as he knows that by discontinuing it, we leave the right way, he neglects nothing to make it distasteful to us. This is the knowledge that should be possessed, by him who leads others in the path of prayer, and which he must impart to them, to prepare them for the combat, and teach them the means of gaining the victory. In speaking of these temptations, however, he will do well to be silent regarding the apparitions of this spirit of darkness, but he must not deny their truth, as it is certain that God sometimes permits them for the good of His elect.

SECTION II.

OF THE COMMUNICATIONS WITH WHICH GOD FAVOURS SOULS GIVEN TO PRAYER.

1st. It cannot be denied that God sometimes communicates Himself to His friends in prayer, and discovers to them His presence, not by a clear vision, according to the ordinary rule, but by faith, grace, and its effects. If He has shown Himself clearly to some holy souls in this life, it has been by a special privilege, which requires to be proved either by Scripture, or the lives of Saints worthy of our confidence.

2nd. These communications and visions of God are not chiefly and essentially sensible, though they produce effects of this kind, such as consolations, pious movements, and holy impulses. It would then be wrong to despise these operations, as deceits of the spirit of darkness. I do not deny that he may be the author of them: but they may also come from God. The wisest course is to examine them, according to the rules for the discernment of spirits, before we either reject or receive them.

3rd. Even when sensible consolations come from God, they do not constitute sanctity. If we desire them, then, it must not be in considering them as an end, but solely as a means to do better, and tend more courageously towards perfection. These consolations are not a certain

indication of the good state of the soul; for, ordinarily speaking, we cannot in this life have any certain sign of the state of grace, but we may often form favourable conjectures, and this is the sense in which we are to understand the flattering consequences drawn from them by the Saints.

4th. Discretion requires that we should use ordinary expressions in speaking of these sensible effects, free from exaggeration and dictated by prudence; for many souls have been deceived by their confidence in these things. After all, they are only secondary, and are to be valued only inasmuch as they contribute to the amendment of our lives, and our progress in perfection.

5th. It is not by these motions and consolations that a soul must regulate and direct herself, but by the doctrine of the Church. It is true that the Holy Spirit may be their author, and then they cannot be contrary to the opinion of the Church; but as they may proceed from other causes, it would be a mistake to regard them as an infallible proof that God wills this, and does not will that. Still more imprudent would it be to lead others by such a rule.

6th. As far as possible, we must prevent these interior sentiments from manifesting themselves outwardly, either by gestures or movements, for when these operations come from God they usually tend to draw the soul within herself. I do not however wish to condemn all exterior manifestations; but if these extraordinary signs were too often repeated, I confess I should feel

some suspicion of them, and I should advise the person who gives them to beg of God, as a favour, to be led, not in these extraordinary ways, but in the path common to all the faithful.

SECTION III.

OF TRUE AND WISE MORTIFICATION.

1st. It is well to state, in the first place, that the mortification taught by the saints, has not for its object the destruction of bodily strength, or the infliction of severe pain, but the moderation of the passions that disturb the soul, and prevent her from being subject to her Creator. Anger, therefore, must be moderated, that we may bear with patience reverses of fortune, sickness, the loss of those who are dear to us, the defects of our neighbour, our own imperfections, until we have overcome them; in a word, all the trials which it may please God to send us. Our love of honours must be moderated by suffering, humiliations, and contempt, courageously, by exciting ourselves to desire them, and even by rejoicing to meet with them on our way. Sensuality must be combated by repressing its inordinate desires, and imposing privations or suffering upon it. Lastly, we must acquire by the constant practice of virtues, habits which will make us perform easily and cheerfully what God requires of us, by renouncing our own will, and surmounting those inclinations which are opposed to His good pleasure. Thus have the

saints understood and practised that abnegation, which Jesus Christ came down from heaven to teach us, and this they call carrying our cross and following our good Master.

2nd. It must be taught, that the passions cannot be entirely destroyed, and that, consequently, the work of mortification is confined to moderating them. That is sufficient, for it would be useless to attempt to attain in this life a peace so perfect that the flesh never rebels against the spirit, and the passions are always subject to the command of reason. If that be the case with some, which I shall not deny, it is an exception to the ordinary rule, and a privilege; it is necessary, then, to avoid the occasions of sin, and especially to have little communication, and that short and prudent, with persons of different sex. To act otherwise, under the pretext of mortification and virtue, is real folly.

3rd. It is of importance also to know, that if interior mortification is the most necessary, that which is exterior must not be neglected. Who does not know the great utility of corporal penances, either to make the flesh subject to reason, or to satisfy the justice of God for our own sins, or those of others? It must, however, be remarked, that difference of condition, occupation, and temperament, should be regarded in the use of these salutary austerities. I may add, that on account of these distinctions, a penance which is light to one person, would be too much for another, and *vice versa*, which proves the necessity of wise dis-

cretion, when exterior mortification is to be enjoined or recommended. By way of rule in this matter, I may say that it is enough for Religious to observe well the rules and customs of their order, without asking for mitigations, unless through real necessity. As for seculars, it is well to recommend them some common kinds of austerities; but they must chiefly be urged to interior mortification, to the denial of their own will, so often opposed to the laws of God and of His Church; lastly, I say to all, and principally to those who aim at perfection, that with regard to mortification, as well as prayer, they should consult enlightened directors, and confine themselves to what they prescribe.

SECTION IV.

OF OBEDIENCE.

1st. When the commandments of God, or His Church, rules which we are bound to observe, or orders given by superiors are in question, obedience is necessary, and must be preferred to works of devotion, especially to those which are prolonged.

2nd. It is a useful and approved custom, universal in the Church, that men of lesser learning and experience should allow themselves to be directed and governed by those who possess these qualifications in a greater degree. As for obliging ourselves to this by vow, except in religion, though it may sometimes be done with profit, it should not be so usually, without mature reflection

and advice. I do not condemn those confessors who advise or receive this obedience. I merely say, that our rules forbid us to imitate them.

SECTION V.

OF CONFESSION AND COMMUNION.

1st. If you recommend to any one a general confession, which you consider necessary, be very careful not to require it to be made to any particular confessor, much less to yourself: it is enough to admonish the penitent that he should choose to hear it, a man of learning and of great experience. When the disclosures made to you, do not show that such a confession is necessary, confine yourself to explaining in what cases it may be useful, and then leave the person who asks your advice, to determine according to his devotion, to make it or not to make it, or to address himself to this, or that confessor. There are cases in which a general confession may be more injurious than useful; for instance, when persons are scrupulous, and have already made one that is sufficient, according to the judgment of a prudent confessor; it is very evident that such a repetition should be forbidden.

2nd. If the confessor who hears a person on one occasion, thinks it expedient to advise him to address himself habitually to a particular priest, he must be careful not to put him under any obligation of doing so. In like manner, all con-

fessors should show facility in allowing their penitents to address themselves to others; if they do it without giving notice, let them appear rather pleased than dissatisfied, even if there should be ground for believing, that such changes are made from imperfect motives. The great point is, that their conscience be at ease; and if this facility cause uneasiness, they may consult the holy council of Trent. (Session xxv. ch. 10.)

3rd. Confessors should act in such a manner as to prevent, or repress too great an affection for them in their penitents (and vice versâ.) If their efforts were useless, a change would be necessary, but it would require discreet management, taking into consideration the condition of the persons, and other circumstances.

4th. The confessor would do well not to insist too much, that his penitents guide themselves in all things, according to his judgment; he would do still better, to avoid mixing himself up in their affairs, where salvation is not concerned. They must be allowed to act as they please in all that is free, and advice should be given them on these points, only when they ask it. There would be, at least in a general way, some inconvenience in making ourselves the dispensers of their alms.

5th. The concession of frequent communion requires prudent discretion. Desires which are too ardent require to be moderated, especially when they are caused by what is called a sensible hunger, for then it is rather "esuries suî" than "esuries Domini." When this eagerness comes

from divine love, as it is good and holy, justice requires that it should be satisfied, if the necessary dispositions exist.

SECTION VI.

OF MARRIAGE, CHASTITY, AND THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

1st. Confessors should not recommend to young persons the vow of chastity, unless for a time, and when permission only is in question, great prudence is needed. It would be still more indiscreet to recommend the vow not to marry, to those who wish to live in the world. When virginity is praised, great care must be taken, not to give the idea that marriage is considered a bad thing. The difference to be made between the two states, is that which exists between the most perfect, and the least perfect.

2nd. It is not prudent to advise, or even to approve in a general way, that women who live in the world should adopt a quasi-religious dress, and engage themselves to wear it all their life. On the other hand, they should promote, very far from opposing religious vocations.

3rd. They would do wrong to exalt one order to the prejudice of others. Each person should be directed to that which is most suitable. I leave these rules to the judgment of my readers, it is for them to appreciate the wisdom they contain.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FATHER BALTHASAR BROUGHT FORWARD IN PROOF OF HIS ZEAL AND EXPERIENCE.

Though this holy Religious had abundant occupation immediately around him, having, besides the duties of his state, the direction of a great number of persons, his charity extended itself to all who required his advice. All who had known him in the different places he had inhabited, full of confidence in his wisdom, had recourse to him in their spiritual wants, and he never failed to give to each the necessary advice. I have in my possession a great number of his letters, and they do him so much honour, that I cannot help speaking of them, and even copying a few. We cannot help admiring in reading them, the goodness of his heart, his prudence and his extraordinary lights in particular. When he was consulted on one point, he answered as if he had been on the spot, and had been made aware of the whole extent of the person's necessities. He could not have done it better in person; his letters contain his spirit and the power of his word; insomuch that he might have said to those who did not know him, what St. Paul said to the Corinthians: "We are such in our letters as we should be with you." (2 Ep. x. 11.) Like the apostle, he wrote his letters for various ends,

sometimes to recall wandering souls to the right path, sometimes to arouse dormant fervour, to encourage timid hearts, console the afflicted, or resolve doubts of conscience. As I cannot give all, I have chosen those which appeared most likely to edify.

FIRST LETTER.

A gentleman, after putting his hand to the plough, had gone back again; and though grace earnestly solicited him to return, he put off his conversion from day to day. The father, having heard this sad news, was moved with compassion, and urged by zeal he wrote him the following letter:

"What I hear of the state of your soul causes me strange perplexity. Must I speak to you or keep silence? Ought I to address you in the language of reproof, or in that of mildness and peace? It seems to me that all paths are shut against me, not by the flowers which send forth fragrance when trampled underfoot, but by briars and thorns which make the feet bleed. What then can I do? What advice shall I give you? All things considered, I shall speak to you as a father: it will no doubt be in vain, but it will at least be a relief to my heart, and an opportunity of showing my compassion for you. For the sake of the Blood of Jesus Christ open your eyes, my brother; acknowledge the hardness of your heart, and your resistance to the call of God;

why do you oppose Him who does not wish your death? To make you return to your duty, this thrice good God uses all sorts of means; He calls, He threatens, He chastises you, and it is not enough to soften your heart! Well then, dig deeper, dig until the water comes. If He hates souls who refuse to hear His voice, how much more must He detest those who are obstinate under His chastisements! Oh my brother, how I pity your misfortune! It is capable of depriving me of consolation for the rest of my life. The only thing I can do now, is to call upon God, and to complain to Him of an ingratitude, a want of kindness foreign to all generous hearts; for those who are gifted with generosity, do all in their power to be agreeable to others.

"Who then, my brother, has so fascinated you as to make you rebel against the truth? You were going on well; who has arrested your course? The devil. Thus you have preferred the devil to truth; but this conduct is inexcusable, for this monster did not die for you as Jesus Christ has done. If it be an injury against God, to Whom all is due, to subtract anything from Him, what is it to give Him nothing? what to abuse His own benefits? what to arm oneself against Him with His own gifts? O listen to His sweet voice recalling you to Him; cease to fly from Him; harden not your heart; fight against Him no longer; take care especially not to shorten His powerful arm by offensive doubts. He will love you more, covered with confusion and prostrate at His feet, than as a

fugitive and obstinate in rebellion. If you meet with Him everywhere when you are flying from Him; if He comes to meet you notwithstanding your offences, if, ungrateful as you are, He still loves you, and offers you the kiss of peace, why do you refuse to yield? You are not, I know, a man to give up your determinations, easily change your mind, or avoid the object of your just desires when it presents itself to you: but you perhaps think that God is no longer the same for you as He was before; you are mistaken, my brother, He is always the same, for He is unchangeable. You only are changed; you should then believe, that if you do what He asks of you, He will accomplish His promises. Have pity on me, my brother, I entreat you, if you have no pity for yourself; have pity on so many good souls, who may be scandalized and grieved by your wanderings: conceive at last a just horror of the food, which has been your nourishment since, quitting the paternal roof, you fled into a strange land. Return to God, poor prodigal child; I will be your surety with Him, I will do penance for your sins, I will unite my tears with yours to efface them. Come and stay a few days with me, you will find here a friend devoted to you, who will take care of your body and soul, and who promises you beforehand the mercy of God. What more shall I say to you? Words fail me to express the grief I feel; I will therefore conclude this exhortation. I beseech you, put an end also to my martyrdom. May God be

your light and strength, that you may see the abyss open under your feet and avoid it. Amen."

Such a letter leaves nothing to be said of the zeal, and tender charity of this apostolic man. Anything that I could add to this picture, could only injure it, I therefore leave it to the reflections of my readers.

SECOND LETTER.

WRITTEN TO ANOTHER PERSON ON A SIMILAR OCCASION.

"I have received your letters, which, to my great displeasure, are more polite than holy. Their effect upon me has been to impress me with great fear; when will you cease to resist the Spirit of God? As long as that continues, you may be certain that His conduct will be harsh and severe towards you. Is sin then so pleasing, that for it you would sacrifice peace of soul, and the favours of heaven; that you would run the risk of drawing down the fearful effects of His just anger? I cannot help telling you that you have taken a very wrong course, and that your state excites my pity. As God has decreed that the soul shall find its punishment in its irregularities, and the execution of His decrees is inevitable, you will feel hereafter the tortures of the poison you now drink with relish; and that nothing may be wanting to your chastisement, you will have to submit to the derision of the

Devil, proud of his victory. You will hear him glory in his malice, insult your credulity, and make a jest of the eagerness with which you have offered yourself to be ensnared. Then, enlightened by sorrowful experience, you will know what you have lost and gained, by dedicating yourself so disgracefully to him. Happy will you be if this kind of hell suffices to bring you back, like the prodigal son, to your Father. Come back now, come back with sincerity: I am ready to meet you half way; but if it be your intention to deceive me with false promises, you may be assured I shall not be duped by them. I will not lose my time as you are losing yours, and work without hope of fruit. I leave you then to His mercy, and beg Him to work your conversion. I write these lines in expectation of the paroxysm of a quartan fever; this ought to prove to you that I do not forget you. Amen."

I will add to this letter only one simple reflection, that this man of God, whose heart was so tender and compassionate, knew well how to be firm when he judged it expedient.

THIRD LETTER.

TO A CARMELITE NUN, POINTING OUT TO HER THE MEANS OF ADVANCING IN PERFECTION.

"When you abandoned the world, you at the same time renounced all that flatters vanity, all desire of the titles and honours that it seeks

after. Doubtless, in associating yourself to souls consecrated to the service of God, you wished to give Him an additional servant. I will then forget what you were in the world, to behold you only as you are now; and instead of speaking to you as a great lady, I will further your design of being little in the eyes of men. If yours are open, as they ought to be, you will acknowledge that contempt is better suited to you than honours; and if it be so, I do not hesitate to proclaim you wise and even blessed. If you had remained in the world, your heart, divided by other affections, could not have constantly enjoyed the sweetness of the Divine familiarity, which is now offered to you. You have therefore found favour in the eyes of the All-Powerful God: yes, most assuredly, and the graces you receive, the delights you enjoy, and the consolations with which your soul is inundated, are so many undeniable proofs of it. What remains for you to do now, except to understand well the cause and end of the leisure He has given you, and that you should employ it in profiting by the graces He has bestowed on you? If you ask me in what you ought to excel, I shall most certainly answer; in humility. You must descend lower in your judgment of yourself, very much lower, and every day more and more. This is true spiritual progress; in vain would you imagine you advance, if you do not look upon yourself as the last of all creatures. The perfection of a soul that knows Jesus Christ, consists entirely in

resemblance to this Divine Master. Now what is the strongest mark of this resemblance but humility? There is perhaps nothing more pleasing to Him, or more advantageous to yourself; we have the proof of it in the special recommendation He has made us of this virtue, saying: 'Learn of Me, that I am meek and humble of heart.' There is nothing more just, but can I say also that nothing is more easy? No, certainly. Humility in words and ceremonies is easily obtained, it is true; but it is not so with that humility of heart, which Jesus Christ asks of us: this requires more time and labour. As you entered religion only to please Him, be well convinced that the best method of succeeding is to neglect nothing to acquire this precious virtue; for this reason I will not cease to assist you in your enterprise."

FOURTH LETTER.

WRITTEN TO A RELIGIOUS WHO WAS TOO MUCH TROUBLED BY HIS ARIDITIES, AND DESIRED DIVINE CONSOLATION INORDINATELY.

"May the peace of our Lord, which surpasses all sentiment, be with your reverence; this it is that puts an end to the tempests, with which the just are assailed in the sea of this world, and which now trouble your heart. Have confidence in the goodness of God. He knows how to calm the storm, and to give you this precious peace. I do not wish to see you so eager for your

advancement, and for spiritual consolation, because this inordinate desire is quite sufficient to disturb your mind and dry up your heart. Is it not written: 'Lay down concupiscence, and you will find repose; put an end to your desires, if you wish your troubles to cease.' By following this advice, you will find peace and spiritual sweetness; otherwise the only effect of your desires will be to remove you further from their object, and to render you unhappy. You have left the world, leave also the useless desires which occupy it; you have sacrificed temporal things, sacrifice also the wish for them; you have joined the army of Jesus Christ, take your weapons and prepare for the combat. Joy was proposed to your Head, and He preferred the cross, with its ignominies and sufferings: this is the example you should imitate. It is to please God, you say, that you desire your advancement and devotion in prayer. If it be so, allow Him to govern you as He pleases, and begin to show your love for Him, by allowing yourself to be guided in the path which He chooses for you. A soul that seeks God alone, wills all that He wills, and whether He give much or little, she is equally peaceful and contented. Take it as a certain truth, that you will please Him better, by remaining tranquil and joyous in your poverty, as long as He allows it to continue, than if you obtained the accomplishment of your imaginary desires. It is for Him to say to you when He thinks proper: 'Friend, go up higher.'

"Up to this time, you have served God long enough in your own way, begin now to serve Him in His. Most certainly, He is worthy to be served disinterestedly, but that is not done, for I hear Him complain of it, in Holy Scripture: 'Who is there among you that will shut the door of my temple and enkindle the fire on My altar for nought?' (Malachi.) If you wish to make true progress in the spiritual life, aim at the reformation of your interior, and obey the Master Who tells you what you must avoid, do, and suffer: labour to overcome your own will: resign to God the care of your advancement, so that you leave Him free to give or refuse you His lights and consolations; this is what is necessary now. If you tell me, that you fear the obstacles caused by your present defects, I answer, that if those of former days, which were much greater and more voluntary, did not hinder the graces God has granted you, those that still remain, will not oppose the good He wishes to do you.

"As for your desire to remove to another house, it is a manifest temptation. Remember what the angel said to Joseph, when he commanded him in the name of God, to take the child and His Mother and fly into Egypt. 'Remain there until I tell you.' This is said to each Religious when superiors choose an abode for them. Remain then in peace with Jesus and Mary. You do not certainly claim to be of higher condition than they were, and you are not worse off at Eldana, than they were in Egypt. You complain of the fatigue

of your continual walks through the towns, villages, and hamlets of the country: another proof of the temptation that besets you, for, tell me was not that what Jesus Christ did, during the whole of His public life? Besides, what do you seek after in these journeys? Souls, no doubt: and are you afraid of giving your toils to save souls, for whom our Blessed Saviour has given all His Blood? If you desire to save them, you can do nothing better than die to yourself, for it is said in the Gospel, that the grain that dies shall bring forth much fruit. 'Si autem mortuum fuerit, multum fructum affert.' Ah, if our ministry is so little fruitful, we need not look long for the cause, it is, that unfortunately, we do not die either to the world or to ourselves."

This letter cannot be too often read and meditated by those who are labouring at their own perfection, and the salvation of their neighbours: they will here find, in a few words, the true means of attaining this twofold end, so dear to God, and so important to themselves.

FIFTH LETTER.

WRITTEN TO A FATHER OF THE SOCIETY, WHO COMPLAINED, THAT HE COULD NOT PERFORM HIS PRAYER WITH DEVOTION AND PEACE.

"If you had not complained of the aridity of your mind, I should be far from suspecting it, for your letters show it to possess wonderful fertility;

and hence I draw the conclusion, that when it disappears, God does not withdraw it from you; He conceals it for reasons favourable to your sanctification. I am really tempted not to answer all the questions you propose to me: for you are not in want, having another Moses at hand, to whom God speaks so often for himself, and for others. However, if you wish it, I will give you for your consolation, what your necessities do not require.

"In answer to your question, regarding the multitude of thoughts which assail you, I answer, that the disquiet this causes you, may proceed from a want of conformity to the holy will of God. As He is the Master, we ought to receive in peace and thankfulness what it pleases Him to give us. Besides, if we love the Cross as we ought, we should not seek after consolation, but trials and sufferings. Remember this sentence of the pious Gerson: 'There is more merit in combating faithfully, than in finding in God the pleasure we desire.' You will do well also to make use, in order to draw nearer to the Divine Majesty, of those temptations which the devil suggests to remove you from Him, saying, as with a loving complaint: 'Why, O Lord, dost Thou forget our misery and tribulation? How long shall I be banished from Thy mind? How long wilt Thou keep Thine eyes turned away from me? How long shall I seek in myself remedies which only increase my sorrows?' (Ps. xliii. and xii.) Are you not aware, Reverend Father, that our corrupt nature requires these storms which urge us to draw near to God? Be well con-

vinced, that His goodness permits them to keep you at His door, and oblige you to knock often, and cry out to Him. Yes, certainly, if you perform this exercise well, your soul will become accustomed to live in the presence of God, not in your way, but in His. If you really seek Him rather than yourself, you will be satisfied with whatever He may give you, persuaded that it is the best.

"Mortification and strict obedience will also greatly assist you, in acquiring this holy habit of the presence of God. The cross is only an object of horror to us, if we look upon it apart from God. At a distance from Him, the pain it causes is insupportable. I conclude then, that a man who wishes to bear his Cross well, feels the necessity of continually thinking of God, because this remembrance is the sole remedy of his evils. If then you are diligent in mortifying yourself, self love itself will unceasingly recall you to His divine presence. You may also have recourse to human assistance, as long as God permits it. It is quite allowable, to make use of remedies, which mitigate or remove spiritual uneasiness. What is faulty, is to become vexed or troubled when Divine Providence does not allow them to succeed."

SIXTH LETTER.

TO ANOTHER FATHER, TO PREVENT HIS EFFORTS TO ACQUIRE HUMILITY, FROM MAKING HIM FALL INTO PUSILLANIMITY.

"O! what pleasure your letter has given me! As I read it, I said to myself: he who speaks thus is not without consolation, and since he gives such glory to God, there is solid virtue in his soul. It is clear to me that God is with you, as He is with those, who sincerely desire to live according to the truth of His Spirit, though in their new course of life, there are more imperfections and illusions than they have hairs on their head. All do not perceive this: but happy are those, who, like you, are aware of them. Between having miseries, and being conscious of them, there is as much distance as there is between earth and heaven; what afflicts you, you say, is, that when you behold so many defects in your soul, you cannot easily believe that God is with you, or that He still has any love for you. Undeceive yourself, father: the truth is, that your position is not unlike that of the two disciples, who walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaüs. 'Their eyes were held,' the Gospel says, 'that they should not know Him.' 'Oculi eorum tenebantur, ne eum agnoscerent.' (Luke xxiv. 16.) He was near them, though they believed Him to be afar off, and they only found out their mistake at the journey's end. However, with a little more thought, they might have found out His

presence, as they afterwards agreed, in recalling the ardour produced in their hearts by His words. Well! it is the same with you, and with all who are in a similar position. You may easily perceive that He is with you, by taking notice of His operations in your soul. Is it not from Him, that these lights proceed, which enlighten you regarding your defects; these transports of fervour you occasionally feel; and these desires of amendment that occupy you? Yes, take it as a certain truth, that it is God Himself Who, present within you, sometimes shows you what you ought to do, in the smallest things, and again reproves you, when you disobey His instructions in the least particular. It is He Who points out to you the evil to be avoided, the good to be done, the crosses to be carried, and the thoughts which you ought to resist. If, then, it appears to you that God is far from you, it is because your eyes are veiled, and apparently for the good of your soul: but whence comes the sorrow that this causes you? To find this out, we must examine its nature: notice it well, and you will find without difficulty, that it is the ardour of love. I shall then ask you, what can be the cause of this ardour? If you tell me it is God, I must conclude that He is present, as His heat is so powerfully felt. If you tell me it is not God, you must then inform me, what other instrument is capable of thus inflaming you with His love. The more miseries you discover in yourself, the more your sufferings will increase, according to Ecclesiastes: 'He who adds to his knowledge,

adds to his grief.' 'Qui addit scientiam, addit et dolorem.' Besides, you have this in common with all who desire truly and seriously to serve our Lord; you hear them cry out to Him and complain of the tribulations they endure, but God does not forsake them in this sorrowful condition. On the contrary, He is with them invisibly, He sustains and encourages them lest they fall under their burden, for it is a well known truth, that the faithful soul stands, only as long as grace supports her weak virtue. The great point for those who serve God, is, not to depart from the path they have entered, on account of the martyrdom they endure.

"St. Augustine, in explaining these words of the forty-ninth Psalm: 'Call upon Me in the day of tribulation, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt honour Me,' teaches a doctrine well suited to my subject. When you were full of the spirit of the world, your inclinations tended towards its false goods; now that you are led by a different spirit, your desires carry you to God, and you grieve that you cannot serve Him as you wish. Who, but the Holy Spirit of God, has made this change in you? This is what the apostle teaches, in these words: 'Charity is diffused in our hearts by the Spirit dwelling in us.' (Rom. v. 5.) This is also expressed by St. John in another passage: 'We know that we abide in God and God in us, because He has given us His Spirit.' (1 Ep. St. John iv. 13.) This is what you should believe regarding yourself, and if humility accompany this faith, you

have nothing to fear. Far from it, you will gain much more by this spirit of confidence than by the incredulity, which you have hitherto practised. If you were still in this unfortunate disposition, I should venture so far, as to apply to you the reproof of Jesus to the two disciples of Emmaüs: 'O foolish and slow of heart to believe!' (St. Luke xxiv. 25.) 'O stulti, et tardi corde ad credendum.' But I see from your letter, that you are beginning to open the way to faith in the Holy Scriptures, and in the truth of God's promises; this gives me greater joy than I am able to express. May God comfort you, in return for the consolation your confidence gives me, and may He fill up the measure of your joy: Gaudium vestrum impleatur. He will do this, I hope, for He wishes His servants to be filled with joy; He wishes it, I repeat, because it is joy that makes them run in the way of His commandments. 'I have run,' said the Psalmist, 'in the way of Thy commandments, since Thou hast dilated my heart.' Forget not my necessities before God, for I do not forget yours. May He be present in your soul with all His love. Amen."

CHAPTER XXXV.

FATHER BALTHASAR IS MADE RECTOR OF THE COLLEGE OF VILLA GARCIA—SERVICES RENDERED BY HIM TO MAGDALENE ULLOIA, THE FOUNDRESS.

After governing for three years, the College of Salamanca, the father was chosen Rector of Villa Garcia and master of novices, for the noviciate at Métine was too full, and the position of this new College seemed well suited for such an establishment; perhaps also some regard was paid, to the great ability of the holy man, for this kind of ministry. However it might be, he was no sooner installed in his new abode, than he began to organize the work, with all the interest it deserved. This noviciate soon rivalled in perfection that of Métine, and became fruitful in edifying incidents which will be mentioned later.

If the thought of this noviciate had some share in the appointment of the father to Villa Garcia, the desire of the foundress was also considered, and it appeared evident by the fruit she gained from his ministry, that this desire proceeded from God. Let us speak in the first place of the relations between the holy rector and this pious lady.

Magdalene Ulloia was the widow of Dom Louis Quijado, grand-master of the palace of the Emperor Charles V., general-in-chief of the Spanish

infantry, president of the council of the Indies, lord of Villa Garcia and other places, who died in 1570. She had become acquainted with the father during his stay at Val d'Olet, where she then lived, and he had inspired her with such confidence, that he was, even when absent, the director of her soul. During the three years he lived at Salamanca, she gave him an account, by letter, of her interior, asked his advice, and closely followed it. I must not attribute this confidence to her own judgment alone, for her brother, Dominic Ulloia, had contributed to give rise to it. This brother was a very distinguished Dominican, who had had spiritual communications with Father Balthasar at Avila, Métine, and Salamanca, and who knew, by experience, the gift he had received of leading souls to perfection. Later, he became Bishop of Macao, in China; but before that, having heard from his sister the plan she had formed of founding a college in the town, he highly approved of it, and advised her to ask for this father to govern it. "The establishment cannot," he said, "be placed in better hands; and I see this advantage in his being rector, that you can take him for a guide in the spiritual life." She therefore asked for him, and was happy enough to obtain him, which she regarded as a signal blessing, for which she gratefully thanked God. As soon as she became a widow, she had determined to go and live in a celebrated convent at Val d'Olet, where a sister of her husband was abbess, but a lawsuit, which the abbess instituted

against her, to dispute her brother's inheritance, made her change her mind. She left her country house, therefore, and went to live in a house she had in the midst of the town, where she lived with as much recollection as she could have done in a convent. Her confessor, for twenty-four years, had been Father Bradanos, a Religious of the professed house. She continued to confess to him, but from time to time, she went to Villa Garcia to confer with Father Balthasar on spiritual things. He began by making her perform the exercises of St. Ignatius. Then he regulated her method of prayer, and taught her to converse familiarly with God. In their frequent interviews, nothing was spoken of but subjects regarding God. She therefore benefited much by them. "I have never known," she said with a feeling of gratitude, "a man more highly spiritual, more capable of speaking of God, more skilful in putting aside secular conversation, and substituting for it subjects concerning perfection; on this point his words were most powerful and inexhaustible; he could carry on for several hours a conversation of this kind, without fatiguing his hearers. As for me, far from being tired, I always felt fresh pleasure in hearing him, and what was still better, great edification."

The fruits that the wise direction of so great a master could not fail to produce, soon manifested themselves. The charity of this lady increased so much, that she no longer put any limits to her liberality, so that her alms, though regulated by discretion, were enormous. They

extended to three kinds of necessities, the temporal wants of her neighbour, the promotion of his sanctification, and the increase of the Divine glory. To give an idea of her profusion in the first kind of alms, she gave annually during the rest of her life, six hundred louis to one hospital, and three hundred to another; she founded a third at Villa Garcia, with an income sufficient to receive there, all the sick on her estates. Besides this, she spent considerable sums in establishing indigent orphans, and assisted abundantly the bashful poor. Her sole anxiety was to prevent any persons in want, from being excluded from her charity. For this end she took into her service a man of piety, whose duty it was, to go and seek those poor persons that concealed their necessities, and to give them alms in proportion to their needs. Accustomed to rise very early, her first care was to see if there were any beggars at the door, that they might not wait long for the assistance they needed. Her steward daily brought her two bags of silver, one full of silver pieces for the bashful poor, the other full of small change for ordinary beggars, and when evening came nothing was left, so well known was her liberality by all the needy. Her orders were, that an alms should never be refused, even to those who should come several times the same day, to the door. This was not all; she laid in every year considerable stores of linen and stuffs for clothing, for those who needed it. Mendicant Religious found in her generosity

resources as certain as abundant, and she sent considerable sums of money to confidential persons at a short distance, in order to relieve those wants which were not within her own reach.

Her charity in relieving bodily wants, was far from equalling that which she manifested for the good of souls. She sent a Jesuit to Algiers, and another to Morocco, each with eight thousand louis to ransom captives, recommending them to prefer those whose faith seemed most in danger. She spent great sums in providing for the safety of poor young girls, in giving them religious instruction, and in having trades taught them. She gave one thousand louis annually, to a house opened for penitent girls, that a greater number might be admitted. This house was a monastery, whose inmates were to be taken entirely from these converted sinners. For fear lest the nature of the charity might be changed, by receiving girls of virtuous life, she took measures which will be related at the end of the chapter.

All this did not satisfy her generosity. She wished, if I may say so, to give alms to God Himself, and she did it with a munificence that could not be surpassed, delighted to give bountifully to Him Who had made her so rich. Let us relate the facts which prove her wonderful liberality. Once, as she was in prayer, on the feast of St. Matthias, God inspired her with the desire to be associated to the labours of this holy apostle, that she might share in his glory. The thought which gave rise to this desire, presented itself to

her mind in rather a singular point of view. During the whole time of her prayer, her mind was taken up with the idea of preaching, hearing confessions, and administering the Holy Communion in different parts of the province of Asturias. Not understanding the meaning of this, she hastened to ask the advice of her brother, the Dominican. After hearing what she said, he gave her this answer: "If you understand that God wishes you to exercise this ministry in person, it is a delusion; if you think of exercising it by means of apostolic men, at your expense, it is a good desire, which I advise you to execute; you will thus become a sharer in the merit of the Apostle St. Matthias." "This was just what I wished to know," said the pious lady, "and I will carry out this important plan." "Very well," said the provincial, "choose for this good work the Fathers of the Society of Jesus. The success that attends their missions proves that God has given them a special grace for this." The pious lady was much pleased with this advice, and resolved to found a college at Oviedo, and to give it to the Society, on condition that missionaries were kept there, to labour for the salvation of the inhabitants of the province. Father Balthasar, to whom she made known this scheme, not only approved it highly, but urged her to carry it out without delay, as much to gain the merit of prompt obedience to the Divine inspiration, as to enjoy before her death, the fruits she hoped for from this establishment. She gave at once one thousand louis to

buy a house in the town, one thousand more to furnish it, and endowed it with an annual income for the support of masters. Often also during the execution of the undertaking, she gave additional sums, so that this college cost her great sacrifices. But the pleasure she felt in procuring the glory of God, made her count that as nothing, as she manifested on one occasion that I cannot pass over. The Provincial, wishing to make known to Father General, the sum total of the expenses, was obliged to question her on the point, but it was of no use. "I do not reckon with Almighty God, father," she replied; "He knows what I give Him, and that is enough." She wished the church to be dedicated to St. Matthias, because she had had the thought of this establishment on his festival day. "This name," she said to the Father Provincial, "will remind me of one of the happiest days of my life; for when this desire entered my mind, it seemed to me that I was giving the whole province to God, or that He Himself made me a present of it."

These missions in fact wrought immense good in this country, where ignorance and immorality reigned: religion resumed an absolute sway there, which gave the greatest consolation to this pious lady. This good news was however accompanied with afflicting circumstances, that gave a new impulse to her charity. The missionaries found everywhere, in the towns as well as in the country, churches destitute of sacred vessels, and sometimes without tabernacles. When she heard of this

poverty of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, she shuddered with horror, and immediately ordered a sufficient number of gilt wooden tabernacles, and five hundred silver Ciboriums, for the wants of the different parishes. Convinced by experience, of the great benefits produced by this College, she resolved to found another at Santander, on the same condition of sending missionaries, to labour for the conversion of the people, who dwelt in the forests and mountains. From this time, she never lost sight of this plan, so great was her zeal for the glory of God and the good of souls: she thought of it day and night, sleeping and watching, during her repasts and her work, but that did not last long, as she quickly put her hand to the work. She promised first an income of 1000 louis, and gave an equal sum for the purchase of a house. In all her good works, her intention was so pure, that she retained for herself no right of patronage over these establishments, merely requiring that the fathers should remember her in their prayers and holy Sacrifices. Her delicacy was so great that she said to the superiors: "I willingly consent that you should give the title of founder, and the rights attached to it, to any one who may augment the revenue of these colleges, or add to their buildings." Could she give a clearer proof, that her zeal was inspired by no self-interest, but solely by the desire to procure the glory of God?

These two foundations were followed by a third, which may be regarded as her chief work: I mean the college of Villa Garcia. "It is my wish," she

said to the superiors, "that you should choose a secluded situation, as pleasant as possible, and that you should erect extensive and commodious buildings, that this college, besides its particular destination, may contain a noviciate, and serve as a country house, for all the fathers in the province. When their strength is exhausted by their laborious ministry, or their piety diminished by their solicitude in the education of youth, and the conversion of souls, they will come here to recruit, and to regain the spirit of their vocation; and will return to their work with renewed courage. I think that the balmy air of a noviciate will help very much to produce this good effect." The two other colleges had been founded with her husband's property: but for this establishment, she wished to give part of what was her own. On the portion of land chosen by the superiors, was a chapel, which her husband had built for a burial place; and where in fact, his body had been placed after his death. The pious widow replaced it by a magnificent church, which she intended for a twofold use; for besides serving as a church for the college, she established there, twelve canons, presided over by a dean, and a choir of musicians, that the services might be performed with due solemnity. She built two sacristies, one for the college, the other for the Chapter, and furnished them abundantly: lastly, she procured the Sovereign Pontiff's confirmation of these arrangements, with the clause that the chapter should be subject to the Father Rector. She also built another church in the interior of the

college, that the Fathers and more especially the novices, might there visit Jesus Christ with greater recollection, and perform in peace their prayers and other spiritual exercises. Through the direction of Father Balthasar, this was a most devout church; besides a great number of precious relics enchased in rich reliquaries, and very tastefully arranged, he caused one of the novices, who was a skilful artist, to paint several beautiful pictures, one of which, representing our Blessed Lord, was admired by connoisseurs. On the door was this inscription: "Ego sum vitis, vos palmites:" "I am the Vine, you are the branches." When the great church was finished, Father Balthasar neglected nothing to make its consecration a most solemn ceremony. The foundress was present with her two brothers, the Marquis of Mota and the Provincial of the Dominicans. Father James Avellanedo, our Visitor for the province, came also, accompanied by the Provincial, and a large number of Religious of the Society. All the nobility of the country responded to the foundress's invitation, and the ceremonies were so well conducted, that there was unanimous approbation. That day all hearts were full of joy, but it was not so on the day following, which was a day of trial for the virtue of the foundress, and the heroic obedience of Father Balthasar. The pious lady having told Father Rector that she wished to take her family over the house to see its construction, and internal arrangements, he saw no difficulty in it, but the Father Visitor was not of the same opinion: "We are not

allowed," he said, "to admit women for this visit: the orders of the Sovereign Pontiffs are express on this point, witness the Brief of Pope Pius V. which exists in all its strength." Father Rector and Father Provincial tried to reassure him, by showing the rights of this lady as foundress, according to the general opinion of canonists: they could not however remove his scruples, and he persisted in his opinion. Father Balthasar had just left him and returned to his room, when the pious lady, to whom the difficulty had never occurred, entered the court with her attendants. The Father Visitor heard this, and his uneasiness being again awakened, he ran to Father Rector, and ordered him seriously to go and dismiss the lady. The Father represented to him, in a few words, the inconveniences that might result from this proceeding, but he would hear nothing, and repeated his injunction. Probably Father Balthasar had never had so painful an act of obedience to perform: to mortify in this manner so virtuous a person, the most generous benefactress, perhaps, of the Society, and as it were, turn her out of her own house, and this without any real reason. But what is too difficult for a Religious who looks at God alone? He went at once, submitting not only his will, but his judgment, and discharged his commission with as much politeness as he could. The holy woman, though hurt by this proceeding, did not lose patience; but it was not so with those that accompanied her. All expressed their indignation, the marquis, especially, who was already

much dissatisfied with the great outlay made by his sister in this kind of work, said to her, throwing down angrily, the staff he held in his hand, "Look here, sister; I am more pleased at the rudeness shown to you, than if I had had the kingdom of Castile given to me. Now, at least, you will know what kind of men you are benefiting, seeing how grateful they are." I leave you to imagine what Father Balthasar must have felt on this occasion.

But, if God allowed this unfortunate occurrence, it was doubtless to exhibit in a clear light the virtue of His servant. Her affection for the Society was not thereby diminished, and Father Balthasar lost neither her confidence, nor her friendship. As soon as she reached home again, she sent a messenger to console him in the distress this affair had caused him, and to assure him that she was not at all displeased with him for it. Her quickness made her suspect the author of this step; but she excused him, believing that he had acted through delicacy of conscience, and not with an intention of wounding her. The Fathers, however, extremely grieved for the pain such a dismissal must have caused her, did their best to make up for it, and among the means they employed for this end, one succeeded wonderfully. To show her the fruits of her good work, they sent to meet her, when she came to Villa Garcia, all the little children of the schools, two hundred in number, and the students of the college, who were still more numerous; this was a great delight to her

heart, as was apparent from the pleased expression of her countenance. The solemnity of the offices in the church, and the beauty of the music, gave her additional pleasure, but what most consoled her was the recollection and modesty of our novices, and the account given her by Father Balthasar of the gifts of God granted them, because he saw in this a certain presage of the good they would do hereafter; and she never repented having made these establishments. In order to ensure the duration of her works, she appointed by will, as protector of them, the Rector of Villa Garcia, giving him a right to take possession of the revenues, whenever the clauses and stipulated conditions should fail to be observed. She thus manifested as much prudence as generosity; but what completely gained for her the admiration and respect of all, was an abnegation of self, that led her to a high degree of perfection. We shall say something regarding this in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FATHER BALTHASAR HELPS HER BY HIS LETTERS TO MAKE FRESH PROGRESS IN SANCTITY—SHE DIES FULL OF VIRTUES AND MERITS.

As this lady lived at Val d'Olet, at the time Father Balthasar was at Villa Garcia, their communications were usually made in writing. The

subject most frequently treated of by the father in his letters, was abnegation, as that virtue is the most difficult to persons of high rank, accustomed to do their own will, and gratify all their desires. I will give as examples, two letters, which he wrote to her on this subject, towards Christmas, in 1576.

FIRST LETTER.

DATED 17TH DECEMBER.

"May the Divine Infant, Who will soon be born at Bethlehem, vouchsafe also to be born in your soul; for those only are capable of duly celebrating His festivals, in whom are wrought interiorly the mysteries which the Church represents to us exteriorly. I have hesitated to write to you on this occasion, because it obliges me to speak of a virtue to which your heart is little accustomed, and a letter on this subject may seem rather an insult than a service. How can I recommend abnegation of self-will to one who sees his will respected by all who surround her? I cannot however make up my mind to be silent, on so important a point, especially as I hope from God's goodness, that He will give you the desire and the necessary courage, to combat this formidable enemy. Amen. Amen. Amen.

"The solemnity of the approaching festivals, and the impossibility which your humility feels of worthily celebrating them, convince me that the

following advice will be favourably received by you. No doubt, during this time of Advent, which is rapidly drawing to a close, your Ladyship will have meditated on the blessing of the coming of the Son of God, and the happiness of a soul which is visited by Him: I hope in His goodness, that He will grant you the grace to behold Him in the dwelling of your heart, and I think it well to point out the kind of reception which will be most pleasing to Him. As soon as He is born into the world, go to His crib with the confidence that you are of the number of the happy souls whom He wishes to console, and to honour with His presence. When you are at His feet, endeavour to be entirely changed, in beholding the wonderful spectacle offered to you by faith, as the lambs of Jacob's sheep were transformed, when their mothers looked at the rods placed before them. What can be more transporting than to behold a God become a child, bound in swaddling clothes, and attended by angels? Learn of Him, for you know His example is our light, the salutary science of humility; learn of Him to despise yourself, to be detached from all visible things, to consider yourself henceforward as forgotten and contemned by all. Even that is not enough; that this resemblance with Jesus Christ may fill you with greater joy, consider, that notwithstanding the love He shows us in His Birth, we are not only careless about pleasing Him, but we grieve Him and make Him weep in the manger. What! Jesus Christ weeps over us,

and we are insensible, and scarcely give Him a place in our thoughts! O such a crime ought to rouse the indignation of all creatures! Two things in this mystery filled St. Cyprian with admiration. The first was, that God should have given us so much, and we should return Him so little; the second, that we should feel so much tepidity and unwillingness to approach Him, when He shows such eagerness to come to us. Let us deplore our blindness, and the hardness of our hearts. Let us entreat the Eternal Father, Who has given us His Son, to send us also His Spirit, that He may help us to love our generous Benefactor, to please Him, to annihilate ourselves before Him; and since this Holy Spirit is a fire, which came down from heaven to inflame the world, let us beg Him to set our hearts on fire with divine love, for without that, His coming would be useless to us. O! we must always in future live in grief and affliction, that our hearts are so. indifferent to the love Jesus Christ has shown us. Is not that life detestable, which is employed in anything else, except in paying so sacred a debt? To whom shall we go, ungrateful as we are? Who will take care of us? who will remedy our evils? Let us go to Jesus, that He may begin in us the office of Saviour, which He comes to fulfil on earth; let us go to the Holy Spirit, that He may glorify Jesus in us; let us go to the shepherds, that they may instruct us; let us go to Mary and her chaste spouse, that they may cover us with confusion. What did they do beside

the manger? Whom did they contemplate? Of Whom were their thoughts? There, says St. Cyprian, no precious furniture was to be seen, nor magnificent swaddling clothes; and such riches would have been disregarded by the spectators, for the Divine Infant drew to Himself all eyes, and all hearts. The whole world might have been there, and neither Mary, Joseph, nor the happy shepherds would have even given it a glance. What consolations indeed could they find in creatures, that they did not find much more abundantly in their Creator? The walls of the stable were unadorned, but the hearts therein were rich with the most precious divine favours. Nothing divine was visible to the eyes of the flesh; but everything was divine to those of the spirit. There never was a poorer or a richer birth, one more destitute, or more abounding in consolations. A child in appearance, in reality a God; nothing but what is common in what meets the eye, but underneath, an ineffable mystery. What a union, paradise and a stable, angels and animals, songs and tears! Let us go and ask the heavenly spirits that watch round the crib, to explain these mysteries to us, and teach us to value, to adore, and to receive this Infant God, as they did at His entrance into the world. He is the All, before Whom all the rest is nothing. May this sweet Saviour convince you so deeply of this truth, madam, that you may no longer retain any esteem of yourself, or of any creature, but that Jesus may be your sole good. Amen. Amen. Amen."

This letter gives an idea of Father Balthasar's tender devotion, and of the skill with which, by little and little, he detached this great soul; assisting her to mortify her natural inclinations, to lead her to the height of perfection. "If you wish," he said to her in other letters, "to attain sanctity, seek God alone in all things, and do not allow any creature a place in your heart." She profited so much by this wise teaching, that she retained no affection contrary to the Divine Will. She attained so high a degree of conformity, that nothing disturbed her, tried her patience, or hindered her acquiescence in what God required of her. Her pure and detached heart was full of joy and happiness, whenever she called on God as her Father: and she was never tired of thanking Him for allowing us to give Him this sweet name. The Pater Noster was her favourite prayer; she never sat down to table without slowly and devoutly reciting it. She would often converse with her guests on the honour of being able to speak to God as a Father, and this thought so occupied her mind that she would often interrupt her meals, to enjoy the delight it caused her. Another source of delight to her, was to walk in the footsteps of her Divine Master: consequently, instead of being driven in a magnificent carriage, or carried in a litter, like others of her rank, she always went on foot. Generous towards others, she practised poverty herself in her clothing, food, and furniture, keeping only the number of servants she required, retrenching everything she

could, to give more liberally to the distressed, and imitate more perfectly the poverty and humility of Jesus Christ, according to the advice of her wise director.

She had still one sacrifice to make: it was that of the affection she bore to Don John of Austria, son of the Emperor Charles V. This young prince, who from his childhood had been entrusted to the care of her husband, had been brought up in her house, looking upon her as almost a mother, and receiving from her in return care and attention truly maternal. Being obliged to quit Spain for the Low Countries, by his father's order, he came to take a tender farewell of her, which revived all the love she felt for him. Alas! they were never again to meet on earth. God, in His mercy no doubt, cut the thread of his life, before the world had corrupted his heart. Father Balthasar was travelling in Arragon when he heard this sad news, and knowing well the grief it would cause his spiritual daughter, he wrote her this letter of consolation from Valencia. "May the Holy Spirit comfort your heart, now distressed by the death of the prince whose loss we deplore. If I did not write to you as soon as I received this sad news, it was because I myself had great need of consolation: but when I reflected on the close ties which bound him to you, I felt that my sorrow was nothing compared with yours, and then I would not delay longer to address you some words of consolation. I will first tell you, that I have prayed much for this

soul which was so dear to you, and for yourself, madam, that God would assist you to bear a blow so overwhelming to your heart. I have done more; for I have begged the Provincial of this country to ask all the Fathers of the province to pray for this double intention. If I had been at liberty to dispose of myself, be assured, madam, instead of writing, I should have hastened to you to express my sympathy in your affliction; but you know well, God restricts the feelings of His servants within limits that they cannot pass, notwithstanding their desires; and the best thing they can do is to obey and to adore Him. O blessed be God for the terrible blow He has now struck; for without doubt He has acted through His love for this young prince, in calling him to Himself in the flower of his age, and for us, in wishing that we should survive, to regret him and weep for him. This event teaches us how He is able, by the same act of His Divine Providence, to reward those who watch, and awaken those who sleep. But this severe lesson is not without consolation; for, if we penetrate the hidden designs of God, in the events that grieve us, instead of looking at the surface only, we shall find life underneath its rigour. 'Lord,' said Isaias, (xxxviii. 16) 'if my conduct is not right, Thou wilt punish me, and by this punishment Thou wilt restore life to me.' This prince, the object of your regret, died in fighting against the enemies of the Church. He died with a pure conscience, if we may believe the witnesses of

his life. You have then every reason to hope that God has received, or at least will receive him into His glory. With this hope, could you continue to mourn his death? If so, he might say to you what our Lord said to His apostles, when they grieved to hear that He was going to leave them to ascend to His Father: 'You do not then love Me; for if you loved Me you would rejoice in My happiness. Besides, how do you know that it is not expedient that I should go?' Believe me, madam, let us allow God to dispose of men and things as He sees good. If our minds cannot comprehend the reason of His counsels, we know at least that they are always just and merciful. Let us then adore them in silence." I say no more regarding the life of this holy woman, to avoid digressing from my subject. I will merely mention that when deprived of Father Balthasar, whose death preceded hers by several years, she continued to follow the direction this holy man had given her, and her death was precious in the sight of God.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FRUITS OF FATHER BALTHASAR'S DIRECTION IN SEVERAL PERSONS OF DISTINCTION.—HE GIVES TO ONE OF THEM TWO REMARKABLE MEDITATIONS ON DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

Though Villa Garcia was only a small place, the holy man found subjects for his zeal, and for the fruitful exercise of his apostolic ministry. Having, for the first time, to deal with country people, merchants, and workmen, he accommodated himself to them, and by his frank and obliging manners, won their confidence and affection. It may be seen on this occasion, that his sentiments were truly conformable to those of the apostle, when he said: "I owe my ministry to all, Greeks and barbarians, the wise and the ignorant." (Ep. Rom. i. 14.) Providence, however, conducted to him even here, some of those distinguished persons for whom he had received a particular grace. Eminent laymen, dignified ecclesiastics, and religious of different orders, came to make the spiritual exercises under him, and consult him for their guidance in the paths of holiness. Amongst them were a priest, who became afterwards bishop of Cordova, and a canon of the same church, who, animated with holy zeal, made his brethren partakers of his happiness in

having been directed by the holy Rector. Several secular noblemen came from the neighbouring places, to confer with him on spiritual matters. Of this number were the Marquis Veladio, Francis Borgia, afterwards Duke of Gandia, and the Duchess of Frias, wife of the Constable of Castile. This lady, who earnestly wished that her husband would place himself in Father Balthasar's hands, induced him to come to his country house, not far from Villa Garcia. Her hopes were not disappointed, for the Duke loved him as soon as he knew him. He made a general confession to him, and followed the rule of life prescribed to him; afterwards he went from time to time to converse with him alone, and give him an account of his spiritual concerns. His veneration for this holy man was so great, that he would not have dared to speak of worldly affairs in his presence, but he took extraordinary pleasure in hearing him speak of God, and returned home full of the sweet perfume of his words.

The Duke Francis Borgia, who came also to perform the exercises of St. Ignatius, was so much benefited that he became one of Father Balthasar's most fervent disciples. Seeing his happy dispositions, the father, by a special favour, admitted him to the conferences he held with his novices, and allowed him to give his opinion like them, when it came to his turn. This young nobleman had been full of love for the world, the manners and language of which he had adopted, but the exercises had changed all his ideas. This

edifying change gave the Father the thought of employing him to persuade others of the vanity of riches, greatness, and sensual pleasures, of which the world makes use to deceive its adorers. He asked him then, to give a discourse to his novices on this subject. The Duke, happy to see himself cured of his disgraceful errors, willingly performed an act, which gave him the opportunity of revenging himself on his treacherous enemy. He spoke of the deceits of the world, like a man who knew them, and who was indignant at having been deluded by them. The novices were greatly touched by this address, and felt more deeply than ever, their great happiness in the vocation that grace had given them.

The relations between the Father and the Duke of Frias, obliged Father Balthasar to make him frequent visits, for which the Duke had great reason to be grateful to God; they were the means of leading to a spiritual life the two daughters of this nobleman, Donna Jane, who afterwards became Duchess of Gandia, and Donna Agnes, who married the Count of Montréal. As for their mother, she was already far advanced in prayer, and rich in virtues; but Father Balthasar caused her to make new progress by directing her exercises, to what was most necessary for her; an entire resignation of herself into the hands of God, and conformity to His blessed will in all things. "You must accustom yourself," he said to her, "not only to resign yourself, but positively to desire, and embrace with delight, all that God wills,

rejecting most carefully the anxiety and sadness caused by occurrences disagreeable to nature." I said that this direction was necessary for her, and in fact, though she ardently desired perfection, she found a great obstacle to it, in the cares which occupied her mind, and rendered her uneasy. To help her to overcome this difficulty, this able master gave her in writing two meditations on Divine Providence, which I will copy.

FIRST MEDITATION.

"After placing yourself in the presence of God, to whom nothing that happens to you is unknown, and who loves you more than you love yourself, begin to meditate on the three following points.

"1st Point, (taken from St. Dorotheus.) You ought to believe, and it will be well to excite your faith in this truth strongly, that in human events, nothing disagreeable that happens to you, can be unknown to Divine Providence. Now, whatever is done or permitted by Divine Providence, is good, and ordered for your real benefit; therefore, in every painful circumstance, you can say to yourself: If my body is suffering, if I experience losses of fortune, if my friends forget me, if my enemies persecute me, if others try to injure my reputation, or to disoblige me, if I am perplexed with domestic difficulties, if others cause me sorrow, this is naturally unpleasant, and a real torment for my heart of flesh; but under the direction of

God and His kind Providence, these events conceal a rich treasure, that I should keep with the greatest care.

"2nd Point. This truth supposed, or rather, well weighed, you must recall to mind and consider with great attention, those words of our Blessed Saviour, that will fortify your faith in holy Providence, that they may sink to the bottom of your heart. They will be there as certain pledges of this revealed truth, and when occasions happen, will help you to understand the fruits that you may gain from the trials that occur. These are some of those divine words: 'When you pray, do not speak much, as the heathens do, for they think they will be heard for their much speaking, (as if they wished to convince God by the force of their reasoning, and move Him.) Take care not to imitate them. Your Father knows what you have need of before you ask Him.' 'Be not solicitous, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? for after these things the heathen seek. Your Heavenly Father knows that you have need of these things.' 'Cast all your care upon Him,' said St. Peter, 'because He has care of you.'

"If you apply to yourself these consoling words, it is scarcely possible that you should still feel uneasiness about anything whatsoever.

"3rd Point. It will be well to reflect, that He who has given you these comforting assurances, is not one of those men who may deceive, or be deceived, but the Son of God Himself, your Re-

deemer and your Master, Who knows the thoughts of His Father regarding you, and makes them known to you for your consolation. It is written that He Who has said these things is the only-begotten Son of God, who dwells in the Bosom of His Father. 'Unigenitus filius, qui est in sinu Patris, ipse enarravit.' (S. John, i. 18.) Then begin your colloquy with this dear Saviour, and say to Him, that since it is He Who gives understanding to our faith, you entreat Him to grant it to you, according to the measure of your necessities, on this point of Divine Providence; that you may henceforth consider the disagreeable events that happen to you, as coming from His hand, and directed by a most fatherly intention. You may end this exercise with the Pater Noster, in which, confidence in Divine Providence is so powerfully and sweetly taught."

I will take this opportunity of making known the humility, with which this holy man received the advice of those who were inferior to him, in every way. I chanced to enter his room, when he was finishing this meditation, to give him an account of my conscience. I was then making my third probation under his direction. "You know Madame de Frias," he said to me, "she is in need of consolation. On this account I am going to send her a meditation on Providence. Read it, and tell me what you think of it." I need not say that I found it very good; but it occurred to me to speak to him of three other points on the same subject, which I had just read in a dialogue of St.

Catherine of Sienna, adding that God Himself had dictated them to her. The humble father then asked me for them, and sent them to this lady, with his own, arranged in the following manner.

SECOND MEDITATION.

"This other meditation is also composed of three points, which Jesus Christ Himself deigned to dictate to St. Catherine of Sienna, to teach her to regard all events as proceeding from His Goodness, and directed towards the salvation of souls.

"1st Point—which is, the omnipotence of God. Know, my child, that I, your glorious Creator, Who made you to enjoy My happiness, am so powerful, that nothing happens in this world without My will or permission.

"2nd Point. His infinite wisdom. I your God am that supreme wisdom, from which nothing is hidden, and which directs all according to its designs. Men may be deceived and led into error, but to deceive Me is impossible. The wicked try in vain to injure Me, for I know how to draw good from evil, and make even sins turn to My advantage.

"3rd Point. His sanctity and goodness. I wish you to be well persuaded of this important truth, that My goodness, is equal to My power and My wisdom, and that in consequence, I cannot will anything but what is good, useful, and salutary for you and others; and no evil can come from

Me. If it were otherwise, I should not love man; but how is it possible I should not love him, when I created him out of love? Hence, it will be easy for you to conclude, that adversities, of whatever kind, have no other object, according to My designs, than your good, so that what seems to you an evil, is of use to correct and perfect you, and lead you to the Supreme Good. If doubts come into your mind on this subject, think that I, your God, know better than you what is expedient for your salvation."

Thus did this wise director provide for the necessities of the souls that confided in him, studying their wants, and giving to each the suitable remedies. It is easy now to understand their attachment and deference for him. "This master," said the Duchess of Frias, "has not his equal; and in his presence I am like a little child that listens and says nothing. Nor am I the only one to place this confidence in him. Many learned Jesuits honour me with their visits: and when they speak of God, those about me always have something to say, or some objection to make; but it is not so when they listen to Father Balthasar. He knows how to treat things in so superior a manner, that his words leave nothing to be desired or found fault with. Therefore his hearers listen to him in silence, as if all were children before him, and when afterwards they repeat any of his maxims, they quote them as oracles." She herself yielded to no one in veneration for the holy man. This feeling showed itself in all her

communications with him; it was evident even in the address of her letters: "To my master, the Rev. Father Balthasar Alvarez, of the Society of Jesus." The two daughters of this lady had for him no less respect, attachment and confidence. He took advantage of it to confer great spiritual benefits on them. He made them contract the holy habit of giving a fixed time daily to mental prayer: he accustomed them to perform several acts of mortification, such as, to distribute their daily alms to the poor with their own hands, and put on a white apron to carry them what was left from the table. One eve of Corpus Christi the four sisters, by his advice, undertook to prepare the parish church for the festival. Two of them swept it thoroughly, a third cleaned the candlesticks and lamps, and the fourth decorated the altars, but the discreet father, to render this act of humility less painful, was careful to place servants at the door to prevent the inhabitants from entering. He never failed to seize the opportunity of mortifying them, by addressing them in words that greatly humbled them, but were so guarded, that they could not have reasonably complained. The youngest afterwards said, regarding this subject, "No one ever mortified me so much as this father, by little words that seemed to escape him, but which deeply wounded my heart. I did not, however, like him the less for it, because I knew that in doing it, he had only my advantage in view."

A happy event, which may even be called mira-

culous, increased the confidence which this family had, in the sanctity of the Father Rector. The mother and her four daughters were driving one day from their mansion to Val d'Olet. When they were descending a very steep mountain, the horses ran away, the coachman was thrown to the ground, and so impetuous was their course, that no one dared to try to stop them. The footmen and horsemen, who accompanied their mistresses, shuddered at the sight of the danger, without being able to help them. The carriage was already turned in a direction that led to a precipice, when, by the arrangement of Divine Providence, Father Balthasar met them. At the sight of their peril he had recourse to prayer, and God was moved by his fervent supplications. The horses, having reached the edge of the precipice, suddenly stopped, and the travellers were saved, contrary to all expectation. They got out, more dead than alive, and seeing Father Balthasar, cried out: "Ah, Father, we owe our lives to you. We should have been lost had not your prayers stopped us at the edge of this abyss." The father, without answering, knelt down to thank God for this great mercy, and the family continued their journey, full of gratitude.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FATHER BALTHASAR GOES, THROUGH OBEDIENCE, TO BURGOS, TO SEE HIS RELATIONS—HE GIVES HIS TWO SISTERS A RULE FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE.

Though the holy Religious had long before made a sacrifice to God of his natural affections, insomuch that he did not wish to pay a visit to his relations, he was not a man to prefer sacrifice to obedience, and place himself in opposition to these words of the Holy Ghost: "Melior est obedientia quam victimæ." "Obedience is better than sacrifice." He well knew that obedience, by immolating self-will and self-judgment, offers to God the most agreeable of holocausts. His superiors having thought proper therefore to send him to Burgos, his native country, he obeyed without making any observation, and this order had the following result. He had in that town two sisters of great virtue, who earnestly desired to speak with him on their spiritual affairs. They had long asked this favour, without being able to persuade him to grant it. Seeing this, one of them had recourse to the intervention of Canon Salcedio, her brother-in-law, who pleaded the cause of these pious women so successfully with superiors, that Father Balthasar was obliged to satisfy them. When at Burgos he gave them an interview, and

found them so well disposed, that he felt pleasure in assisting them, by pointing out to them the means of attaining perfection, and familiarity with God. After speaking to them on these points, fearing they might forget what he said, he put his instructions in writing, arranging them so as to make a rule of life perfect in its way. I will give it entire, for the sake of those whom it may suit, and to give confessors a model of direction for souls aiming at perfection.

In order to understand well the drift and the order of his regulations, we must first know the system of spiritual direction, adopted by this great master; I will explain it clearly in a few words. When any one came to him to be guided in the way of perfection, he made him occupy himself with the first week of the Exercises, then he advised him to meditate assiduously on the mysteries of our Lord's Passion. This was because nothing is better adapted to give perfect contrition, to inspire a love of mortification, to increase the love of God and our neighbour, and to stimulate us to practise virtues in all their excellence. To enlighten him, and make him more attached to this direction, he used to say, "Do not believe you are making any progress until you bear Jesus Christ in your soul by the continual remembrance, gratitude, love and imitation of this Blessed Saviour, and of the heroic virtues practised by Him on Calvary. He is the type of perfection; it is only by reproducing Him in yourself, that you are really working at your per-

fection." After this preamble, which seemed necessary, or at least useful for my readers, comes the rule of life composed by this able director.

1st. On first awaking call to mind the subject of meditation you should have prepared the night before, to prevent other thoughts from occupying your mind, dissipating your heart, and disturbing the prayer you are going to make.

2nd. Being come to the place where you intend to perform this holy exercise, take holy water, place a watch before your eyes, and standing one or two paces from the place where you are going to kneel, represent to yourself Jesus Christ present to hear you; make a profound inclination to show your veneration for His Divine Majesty, then kneel down.

3rd. Run over quickly in your mind the points of the meditation; then briefly ask our Lord to direct your thoughts, words, and actions to His greater glory, considering how necessary it is that a creature, to act rightly, should wholly depend on her Creator, without Whose help she cannot even conceive a good thought.

4th. You must then represent to yourself the mystery on which you are going to meditate, as if it were taking place in your oratory before your eyes. If it be the Passion, which should be the most frequent subject of your prayer, ask this good Jesus, Who has made you a partaker in the fruit of His sufferings, to inspire you with thoughts and sentiments suited to this divine mystery, in

the measure best pleasing to Him, and which He knows to be useful to you.

5th. The method of arranging the points of your meditation is as follows. In the first you consider Who it is that suffers, that His infinite greatness may cause you to appreciate more truly His sufferings and ignominy: in the second, you will examine what He suffers, less by the reasoning of your mind, than by an interior glance which will give you a more lively representation of His various sufferings, which must be reflected upon in detail; in the third, you will contemplate the patience with which He endures all and each of His cruel torments; His humility under contempt, His charity towards those who treat Him with so much injustice and barbarous cruelty. Here, moved with compassion, you may venture to interrogate this good Master, and say to Him: "O God of infinite Majesty, what motive can have induced Thee to undergo such torments?" and His interior voice will answer: "No other, My child, but My love for thee." Then you will ponder on this word *love*, you will taste its relish as it were, until you feel your soul moved and resolved to return Him love for love, by bearing with the ingratitude of men, their contempt, their natural defects, and their ill-behaviour towards you. I wish you to observe here, that to meditate well, these two things must not be separated; the consideration of the mystery, and the change which it suggests to you to make in yourself: now the means of bringing about this change is to seek,

by the light of grace, what kind of mortification will correspond to that which this beloved Saviour has endured for you. The highest degree of prayer and the secret of advancement, do not consist in enjoying much sweetness and consolation, but in humbling ourselves, and bearing well whatever happens.

6th. On the chief festivals, you may interrupt your ordinary meditations, to consider the mysteries commemorated in these solemnities. If, however, you are to communicate, you would do well to give the preference to the Holy Eucharist, and keep the mystery for the evening prayer.—It would seem that the communions of this pious woman were rare; for I do not think he would have given this advice to a person accustomed to communicate frequently.

7th. In aridities, darkness, and dryness, think that your sins are the cause of it, in part, at least: if you are not aware of them as offences against God, your indevotion is a proof of their existence; you should therefore humble yourself, and say to God: "O Lord, I am gathering what I have sown, for there is no doubt that the obstacles that prevent my serving Thee, are the fruit of my sins: of those sins which have displeased Thee, and which perhaps Thou hast not yet fully pardoned, because I have neglected to satisfy Thy justice; I grieve, O my God! for the hardness of my heart, inasmuch as it is my own work, but I receive it as a chastisement, and submit to it with joy; let it last, O Lord, as long as it shall please

Thee; during my whole life, prolonged for a thousand years, if Thou seest good." This humble and resigned submission cannot fail to give you great peace, and then, either devotion will return, or you will continue to follow this path of confidence and humility, which is much safer.

8th. You will make every day, at least a quarter of an hour's spiritual reading in some book of piety, written with simplicity, and uniting examples with precepts.

9th. The examen of conscience is necessary at the close of the day, not only of your faults in general, but also of the special defect which you have undertaken to correct. A quarter of an hour should be spent in this important exercise.

10th. The time devoted to repose should not be left to caprice: it is useful for your perfection that you should go to bed, and rise, at the time you have wisely fixed.

11th. Adopt the holy custom of confessing your sins once a week, of communicating every Sunday, and even sometimes during the week, if your confessor judge you worthy of this favour, but it is not merely in this, that you should consult your confessor: you must submit to his authority, your penances, your devotions, everything regarding your spiritual life, that nothing may be left to your own will; it is the sure means of becoming very pleasing to God, of avoiding illusions, and of making rapid progress in perfection.

12th. You will write to me every month, to give me an account of your exactness in following these

rules, and tell me how you profit by them. You will not omit to speak of your health, of the temptations that have molested you, and of the consolations and favours the Divine Goodness has bestowed on you.

Not satisfied with giving these written rules to his pious sisters, the good Religious neglected nothing to imprint them in their hearts. His exhortations on this subject were so touching, that while listening they burst into tears, and felt their hearts melted by the fire of devotion. I had the opportunity of knowing one of these pious women, and I can declare that she had reached a high degree of virtue. St. Catherine of Sienna was her model, and she read nothing in her life without trying to imitate it. Hairshirts and disciplines were her daily practices; she fasted four days a week on bread and water, she slept on a chair, and often spent whole nights in prayer. Eleven years before her death, she had obliged herself by vow to wear, night and day, an iron belt round her loins; when the skin was grazed, she did not leave it off on that account, but contented herself with applying ointment to the wound. She kept it on, even in her last sickness, and only put it away two days before her death, and this only to hide from those who had to bury her, the knowledge of this unusual austerity. Such were the effects of the advice of this holy brother, and of the influence he exercised over hearts.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

PROFOUND HUMILITY OF FATHER BALTHASAR AMIDST HONOURABLE EMPLOYMENTS AND THE MOST BRILLIANT SUCCESS—REMARKABLE SENTIMENTS COMMUNICATED TO HIM BY ALMIGHTY GOD, REGARDING THIS IMPORTANT VIRTUE.

The career of the pious Religious had been, up to the time at which we speak, singularly prosperous and fruitful in happy results. God had vouchsafed to bless his employments and ministry for his neighbour, and had not even spared miracles to gain him the respect and confidence of the souls he had to govern. He enjoyed the authority conferred by sanctity, and passed for a man as prudent as enlightened, both in the Society and among the most illustrious of the laity. This favourable opinion was too openly manifested to be concealed from him, but his humility never failed. Is not this a proof that his virtue was heroic. I may here cite the authority of St. Bernard: "It is a great and rare degree of virtue, when a man does great things without being conscious of it, when his sanctity is seen by every one excepting himself, when public opinion considers him great, and he alone looks upon himself as contemptible. In my opinion miracles do not prove so much, as such humility." (Serm. 13, in

Cant.) The same Saint says elsewhere: "It is not wonderful that we are humble, when we receive no attentions; but a humility that is unchanged by honours is a bird rare on earth." (Serm. xlv.) In a general way, humility hides sanctity, or sanctity destroys humility. To have only a low opinion of oneself, when one is in a high position, is a very difficult and unusual thing; but the less common the more glorious it is. (Ep. xlii.) My readers will no doubt be struck by the just application of these words to the virtuous man whom I am praising, and they will conclude, with me, that this Father, who knew how to join sincere humility with the most exalted virtues, was a great servant of God.

Do I praise his humility without cause? Let us examine his conduct, and we can judge. "Humility," says St. Bonaventure, "is a virtue that contains three degrees, the first of which is to esteem oneself vile; the second, to wish that others should think the same; the third, not to be elated by the gifts of God, however great they may be." Such was the humility of Father Balthasar.

1. That ray of Divine grace, which showed him so clearly the infinite greatness of God, discovered to him at the same time his lowness and nothingness, for in a soul thus enlightened, the one exists not without the other. Let us hear him relate his own sentiments on this point. "One day, on awaking, a thought occurred to me, which was quite new, and which gave me great consola-

tion. This light showed me what a soul is with God, and what she is afar from Him. The soul without God appeared to me ugly, dark, and perpetually changing; I should say deformity, obscurity, and inconstancy itself, a handful of ashes in a strong wind, the needle of a compass before it has found the pole which fixes it; in fact, man without God is an idiot, a fool, a criminal, against whom God makes war, because he wishes to make himself God." We may believe that a man who found on awaking, such thoughts as these in his mind, was accustomed to entertain them when he was awake. What appears surprising at first sight, is, that this thought should have caused him so much joy and relish; but we cease to wonder when we reflect, that God well knows how to render sweet and consoling, those thoughts that are agreeable to Him. This vision of the deformity of a soul disfigured by sin, enveloped in the darkness of ignorance, tormented by the inconstancy of her desires and projects, agitated, and, as it were, scattered like ashes by the winds of temptation, uneasy and unhappy, as long as she is separated from the power that attracts her, this thought, I repeat, is pleasing to God, because it humbles man whose abjection honours God, and inspires him with the wish to escape from his misery, by uniting himself with God.

To this light, which showed the father his own misery, our Lord added another, which discovered to him his smallest defects, and made him see that they were enough to render him vile in his

own eyes; but what struck him most of all, was to see, how the gifts of God were tarnished and disfigured in him, by being mixed with what was his own. Let us hear him give an account of a thought, with which he was inspired on this subject.

"On the day after I had besought of God to direct my thoughts, words, and actions, purely to His glory, I received on awaking, and when yet half asleep, a grace that I could not have imagined, much less asked for. Without any previous preparation, I had an interior vision, that our spiritual life resembles cloth of gold, which led to the following comparison. To spoil this rich material, it is quite enough that one coarse thread of a different colour be inserted. Well, in like manner, to spoil the work of God in us, nothing is needed but the mixing our words, thoughts, and works, with those which God inspires in us, and this is what too often happens. The Holy Ghost gives us one thought, and we add to it twelve of our own, which stifle it; for one word suggested to us by Him, we utter four-and-twenty which have not a shadow of utility, and to one work which He prescribes, we add two of our own will. Hence this beautiful web of our perfection loses much of its lustre and value. Let us judge from examples taken from material and external things. If wild and sour-tasted fruits are mixed with preserves of good fruits, our palate is disgusted; if bitter almonds are mixed with the oil of sweet almonds, it becomes unpleasant; and if at dinner,

dishes made in this way were offered to us, we should leave the table disgusted and offended, and we should say that such food, though containing much that is good, is none the less unpalatable. Now, a soul that mixes with the work of God, her own thoughts, words, and actions, is a cloth of gold spoilt, which cannot in consequence be pleasing to Him. Is not this what He wished us to understand by those words of the prophet Isaias: 'All our justice is as soiled linen before God, He turns away His face that He may not behold it.'" (ch. lxiv. 6.)

"However, there is something yet more deplorable; the greatest misfortune is, that this manner of acting does not humble us, or make us blush with confusion before our Lord. How is it with artizans of every kind? if the defects in their work are perceived, I do not say by connoisseurs, but by ordinary persons, they are covered with shame; and we expose, without confusion, the spoiled tissue of our life, before the eyes of God. He is displeased with us, yet we are joyous and tranquil. Have we not reason to say with Jeremias, that we have the bold face of an abandoned woman that knows not how to blush? How is it that the defects in our work do not humble us, when the least good we do, suffices to puff us up, though without a shadow of reason? For, if pride does not quite destroy the gold, it discolours it, and by mixing with it what is vile and common, takes away all its value." God took delight in humbling this great soul; He said to him on

another occasion: "When will you learn to write without erasures? when will you learn to make straight lines, form legible characters, and work with dexterity? You are still but a child in virtue, and you know not how to do anything in a perfect manner."

Another time, wishing to make known to him his nothingness, and convince him of his incapacity, notwithstanding his fervent and generous desires, He reminded him of these words of the apostle: "The prize is not for him who desires it, and runs to obtain it, but for him to whom God gives it in His mercy." (Rom. ix. 16.) Now, if success is a benefit, the weak are as capable as the strong of obtaining it; there is, therefore, no reason to be proud of the good we may do. Here is another lesson which was given him for the same end: "One day, when I clearly saw my complete nothingness, and my soul cried out to God, as earth without water, an interior light showed me how true it is, that everything good in our soul, comes from the sweet hand of God, and how just it is, that she should be wholly occupied in rendering Him thanks. Wishing to make me feel my dependence upon Him, and teach me to distrust myself, He showed me my vain confidence in my own strength, in an aspect which filled me with surprise and terror, but this interior lesson was not all. As I was then occupied in giving a mission, this good Master finished what He had begun during another, that I had given shortly before. In that, He had convinced

me that I might confide in Him in all things; in the last, He proved to me, that I could not, without folly, trust in myself, either in point of virtue, or even in the learning and talents I might possess. It happened, in effect, that during the exhortations, I hesitated every moment, failing both in ideas and words; then, seeing more plainly than ever my incapacity, and the power of grace, I resolved to leave myself, and cling closely to God."

In order to consummate his perfection in this first degree of humility, this good Master made him feel a great dread of committing faults, and losing the good he possessed. In consequence, he watched more carefully than ever over its preservation, fearing he might never regain it if he had the misfortune to lose it. Then, by another effect of grace, counting as little what he had done, and looking upon himself as a man just beginning his course, he tried to go forward, thus verifying the words the Holy Ghost has spoken, of the humble man, in the Book of Ecclesiasticus: "When he shall have finished, then shall he begin." "Cum consummaverit homo, tum incipiet." (ch. xviii. 6.) Hence the ardent desires which he expressed to God, entreating his conversion, as if it had yet to be made. Being one day in prayer, a doubt whether God willed his conversion occurred to his mind; but a comparison that was suggested to him, soon revived all his confidence in the Divine Mercy. "If," said he to himself, "any one after offending thee, acknowledged that he had done wrong, wouldst thou

not be satisfied with him? Yes, certainly. And if the consciousness of his fault caused him confusion and remorse, induced him to submit to any kind of penance, and made him resolve firmly not to offend thee again, wouldst thou not be still more favourably disposed towards him? Without doubt. And if he could not of himself enter into such sentiments, wouldst thou not assist him by every means in thy power? There is no doubt of that. And if thou desiredst to gain his friendship, and he seemed to wish to obtain thine, wouldst thou not willingly extend thy hand to him? Most assuredly. Well! thou wouldst do all that, who art ill disposed towards the guilty, and will not God, who is so good, do the same towards thee? Do not insult Him so far as to place His mercy below thine; if thou wishest to be converted, weep for thy sins, satisfy His justice, and recover His favour, not only will He consent, but He will help thee most willingly, first, because He is good, and then, because He is a father." Thus did this holy Religious reanimate his courage and his confidence in God; for true humility is not cowardly, it does not cast down the heart, it knows not what it is to despair. On the contrary, the more diffidence it has in itself, the more its confidence in God increases, and when it sees that it can do nothing without God, then it hopes for all things from Him.

2. From this first degree of humility, our pious Father rose to the second, that is, having become contemptible in his own eyes, he sincerely

desired to be considered such by others. With this view, he concealed as far as he could, the gifts he had received from God, natural and supernatural, for fear they might gain him the esteem of men. It was not without repugnance in the beginning, for this dissimulation seemed to him to be the result of great virtue, and this thought alarmed his humility; he contrived, however, to remove this fear, by putting to himself this simple question: "Did Jesus Christ never hide or dissemble anything?" From that time he concealed more carefully than ever from others, the mercies of God in his regard. On this account, we only know a very small part of those he received. On the contrary, he loved to manifest his natural defects, and that did not satisfy him: in order to succeed the better in making himself contemptible, he went so far as to declare his sins. Thus, for instance, when he was rector at Métine, Father Gonzalez being come there as visitor, instead of making a simple manifestation of conscience to him, as is customary in the Society, he made known to him all the sins of his life, as if he had been at confession. In vain did the Father try to stop these humbling disclosures, he could not prevent his going to the end, the humble rector saying that this declaration might be useful to him. The visitor, equally moved and edified, conceived so high an opinion of him, that the storms which soon burst forth against the holy man, could not injure him in his mind; for he was persuaded, that so humble a Religious must be innocent of the

delusions with which he was reproached. It would seem indeed, that God only allowed these accusations to satisfy his desire of being despised, and the patience with which he bore this unjust persecution, proved the sincerity of these desires. We may say that this was the triumph of his humility. Without doubt, it is a glorious thing to hide the gifts we have received from God; it is even more so to manifest our defects and sins; but to rejoice at being despised, as Father Balthasar did, on the occasion of which I speak, is heroism; and such acts are very rare, according to Cassian. "Alas!" said this pious author, "how much hypocrisy there is, even in humility! for many men speak ill of themselves, who would be very sorry that their words should be believed; they only wish that what they say should be attributed to humility. The proof of this is, that when they are depreciated, they are sad, and lose both peace and patience." However it may be, it is certain that Father Balthasar had attained the second degree of humility. The following chapters will place this truth beyond dispute.

3. He was not, however, a man to remain stationary; he quickly reached the third degree, since the most excellent gifts of God, and the highest offices, did not in the least diminish his contempt of himself. All his Religious, if he had been believed, surpassed him in virtue, and covered him with confusion; he sought to profit by the lights of all, without excepting the novices, and in effect, he did not disdain to benefit by what

he called their lessons. Here are some examples. One of the novices, in giving an exhortation on Whitsun-Eve, cried out with great fervour: "Behold the Holy Ghost is coming to us, let us go to meet Him bearing His colours; and since He is a Spirit, let us receive Him spiritually." This idea pleased Father Balthasar so much that during the time of this solemnity, he continually repeated it. Another said in a spiritual conference, speaking of the ideas of his own mind: "I blush with confusion when I think that these nothings are an obstacle in the way of such great things." These words were according to Father Balthasar's heart; he loved to reflect upon them, and though he did it frequently, instead of causing weariness, they gave him new pleasure each time.

One of the Fathers related one day in his presence, that a child, who was asked why a certain nobleman lived in a small village, had answered: "Because his property is there." The holy man, accustomed to turn everything to profit, inferred from these words: that since Jesus Christ dwelt in the house, He had His possessions there. Then carrying on this thought, he found without difficulty that His possessions were the souls of the inmates, and that this Divine Master dwelt in the midst of them, to protect them, and watch over their necessities; and lastly he applied to this idea in confirmation of it, the words used in giving Holy Communion: "May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve your soul to eternal

life." After drawing all he could from this sentiment, he said to the Father whose anecdote had given rise to it: "I have this happiness, that every one teaches me, even little children."

Those about him, delighted with this humility, and seeing the pleasure he felt when it was gratified, purposely sought for means of gaining this end; with this view, some one said to him: "I have read in St. Thomas, that in the first ages of the world, there were no idolators, because the remembrance of the Creator was still fresh. It seems to me that this reflection may well be applied to prayer, which, by renewing the remembrance of the Creator, prevents us from becoming inordinately attached to creatures." This thought took such hold of the holy rector's mind, that he appeared stunned; he then asked the speaker to show him the passage, that he might meditate upon it at leisure.

As for the honourable offices with which he was intrusted, they never inspired him with pride or haughtiness; he conducted himself in all things like the other Religious, never taking precedence of them, except in humble and abject employments. When he was Rector at Villa Garcia, he treated the scholastics with a deference that quite confused them. When he left the house, he insisted that his companion should walk on his right hand. On reaching Toledo, in the capacity of Provincial, his first action was to kneel at the feet of the Religious and kiss their hands. We shall, however, return later to this subject.

CHAPTER XL.

HIS METHOD OF PRAYER BRINGS UPON HIM A SEVERE PERSECUTION, WHICH ONLY SERVED TO SHOW MORE CLEARLY HIS HEROIC HUMILITY AND PATIENCE.

Though the humility that continues undiminished amidst honours and prosperity, is excellent and glorious, it is not however thoroughly tried, deeply rooted, and truly perfect, until it has passed through the crucible of contempt and adversity. Then, and then only, can it be proved that the just man sincerely despises himself, and wishes to be despised by others; for, when these are his true sentiments, he rejoices to see himself treated as he deserves: a thing which cannot be done by a man, who has only the mask of humility. But it is not only humility that passes triumphantly through such trials, they also bring out many other great and solid virtues; thus meekness is manifested, by keeping down the emotions of anger against those who offer injury; patience shines forth, by moderating the sadness caused by contempt; charity shows itself by pardoning enemies, loving them, and speaking of them without sharpness or bitterness; confidence in God, by the tranquillity with which the cross is borne; and the love of Jesus Christ, in the fidelity with which He is served through all. This is why, as St. John

Chrysostom remarks, "Almighty God delights in the trials of His elect, and permits them to be despised and persecuted. Is it not also a great honour for them, to be treated like their Divine Master, and to show themselves superior to prosperity and adversity: is there in fact a more certain sign, of fidelity and devotion to their Divine Master? "Let us show ourselves," said St. Paul, "to be true ministers of Jesus Christ, by patience in tribulations, in poverty, in afflictions, in chains and prison, in evil treatment, in the attacks made upon us; fighting on the right hand and on the left, with the arms of justice, showing what we are in ignominy and in glory, in good report and evil report, being willing to be esteemed seducers, when we are sincere." (2 Ep. Cor. vi. 7-8.) "Sed in omnibus exhibeamus nos metipsos sicut Dei ministros, in multa patientia, in tribulationibus, in necessitatibus, in angustiis—per arma justitiæ a dextris et a sinistris; per gloriam et ignobilitatem, per infamiam et bonam famam: ut seductores et veraces."

Such Father Balthasar showed himself to be, in the storm we are going to describe; but we must first speak of the dispositions in which it found him.

When God wishes to send trials, He strikes us in what we hold most dear. When He has to deal with worldly men, He cuts off honours, temporal possessions, and the pleasures of life, because all their affections are placed therein. With regard to learned men, He allows their learning,

their capacity, and their works to be disparaged. As for His saints, as they care little for these things, if indeed they can be said to care at all, He afflicts them in what concerns their spiritual life, in the exercise of virtues. This explains why, in order to try Father Balthasar, after afflicting him with long and severe aridity, He allowed a terrible storm to burst forth, against his method of spirituality. When this holy Religious was at Salamanca, several persons took it into their heads, that he was not at all enlightened, and was deceived by the devil. Understanding nothing of the sublime kind of prayer with which God favoured him, they believed it to be an illusion, and wished absolutely to make him change his method. The humble Father, docile as he was, could not however yield to their wishes, because he was certain the Spirit of God was leading him; and it is better to obey God than men. He was well aware also, how dangerous it is to resist an attraction, of which we have certain knowledge. Their eagerness in pursuing him, was caused by a suspicion, that he despised the method of prayer by reasoning, approved by the Saints, recommended by their illustrious Father, and practised in the Society; hence, their fear that he might lead the novices, and those Fathers who gave him their confidence, into new and deceitful paths. If the fact had been so, there would have been cause to praise the zeal of his persecutors, but it was nothing but a false presumption on their part; therefore, the war they waged against him was

unjust. In this I behold nothing new or surprising: zeal has often produced similar dissensions in religious orders, and even in the Church, without perhaps any sin in these discussions. If we wish to be just, we must attribute it to nothing but the misery of human nature, which Divine Providence permits to follow its course, for ends worthy of His wisdom and goodness. These sad differences may be explained thus. The subject is either some controverted question, when each supports his own opinion warmly, under the belief that it is the true view, or at least the best, and that the interests of God and of souls are mixed up with it; or it is some recognized truth, the defenders of which attack those whom they believe to be its opponents, though they are mistaken on this point. It is evident that these disputes arise from zeal: there may indeed be some impetuosity, obstinacy, or anger; but it may also happen that in this the contending parties gain real merit. Do we not find, in Holy Scripture, similar disputes among the angels, in circumstances where the will of God was not manifested to them? Daniel relates that the angel guardian of the Persians resisted the angel of the Hebrews. (Dan. ix. 13.) How then can we be astonished to see dissensions among men, though they be wise and holy? Since they are men, it is easy for them to be ignorant of some things, and mistaken regarding the opinions of others.

To return to our subject. The fathers who objected to the holy man's method of prayer,

thought proper to refer the case to the judgment of the Father General, Everard Mercurian. The General, who knew little of Father Balthasar, and was aware that his accusers were men of note, thought it necessary, before he decided, that the case should be thoroughly examined; and charged the visitor of Spain with this commission. When this Father reached the College, of which the accused was Rector, it was, I think, Villa Garcia, he told Father Balthasar that he wished to see his manuscripts, and examine the doctrines they contained. The humble Rector fetched them at once, and gave them to him, without the least remark; and during the whole time he retained them, never said a word about this affair. His adversaries, less prudent, attacked him in conversation several times during the course of this examination; but he heard their arguments without making any answer, allowing himself to be blamed and humbled, with a patience that ought to have undeceived them. He did not even deny some calumnious accusations, the falsehood of which he could have easily proved, having constantly before his eyes this certain truth, that there is no perfect humility without humiliations, nor patience without contradictions.

But it was not this persecution that led him to adopt this excellent doctrine. He had long taught it to others in words and actions. I can mention a fact which will prove what I say. Before the events of which I am speaking took place, he said, one day, in giving an exhortation to the Religious:

"You must know, that it is of great consequence for him who wishes to become solidly virtuous, to profit by circumstances that are painful to nature, and that true progress consists in humbling oneself, suffering patiently, and keeping silence for the love of God, especially when our honour is compromised. This is the means," he added, "of obtaining great graces from the goodness of God." To confirm this last assertion, and to inspire his hearers with generosity, he mentioned a circumstance personal to himself. "It happened to me once," he said to them, "to allow my honour to be imperilled, and from that time God has loaded me with His gifts and graces." He said no more, but I can supply the details.

In a certain provincial congregation, a serious accusation was made against him, which brought upon him a reprimand before the whole assembly. After the session, a friend of his, who was sure of his innocence, earnestly begged him to justify himself; shaken by this Father's authority, he had some thoughts of doing it, but, reflecting that this proceeding would be a great satisfaction to his natural inclinations, he thought it well to take the advice of another Father whom he knew to be truly spiritual. After hearing the case, this Father answered, that by bearing the weight of this accusation, he would make a very pleasing sacrifice to God: he did not, therefore, defend himself, and our Lord recompensed his heroic silence so generously, that he could not feel grateful enough for the wise advice given him, which

he made his rule of conduct in similar occurrences, and especially on the present occasion.

His sole resource during this tempest, was to have recourse to God in prayer and the holy Sacrifice; it was not in vain, for he received answers and consolations that greatly encouraged him. Providence caused him to mark them in his journal, no doubt for our edification. The following is an extract: "On the ninth Sunday after Pentecost, as I was offering the holy sacrifice with a deeply afflicted heart, God gave me four interior lights, which greatly consoled me. The first made me understand more clearly than ever the words of the apostle: (1 Cor. x. 13.) 'God is faithful, and will not allow you to be tempted above your strength; but will make with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it.' The second was this interior speech: 'If, in a religious order like thine, nothing bitter was to be found, what wouldst thou have to suffer for Me?' This made me feel, that if I were such as I ought to be, instead of feeling repugnance to the chalice offered me, I should ask for something much more disagreeable. The third was a voice that said to me interiorly: 'Offer and receive My Body and Blood. It will give thee strength to bear thy sorrows.' The fourth came during my thanksgiving. I heard the same interior voice saying to my heart: 'Be at peace, and let this thought comfort thee, that God is a witness of thy sorrow, and allows thee to endure it for thy good.'"

He did not omit to animate and encourage himself, by reasoning on his position, and saying to himself: "Thou art much mistaken, if thou thinkest thou canst gain heaven, without crosses and trials. Heaven is the kingdom of the tempted, the afflicted, the despised; how then couldst thou dare to take a place, among so many brave soldiers and valiant captains, if thou wast timid and cowardly in the combat? If God made thee judge of thy own cause, wouldst thou decide against thyself? Thou wouldst commit this folly if thou shouldst lose courage in so precious and salutary a trial. When a proprietor has laid out much money in cultivating his vineyard, I can imagine his grief when a terrible hail storm destroys all its fruits; but if the hailstones were of gold, would his sorrow be reasonable? would he not rather have cause to rejoice at so fortunate an accident? Well, the contempt that falls like hail on a truly patient soul is all gold, and what she gains on such an occasion, is worth infinitely more than what she loses." When he spoke of the afflictions of the just man, he used to say, that the saints in heaven behold him, with an earnest desire to see him gain the victory in the combat. He added, that Jesus Christ Himself is an attentive spectator of his conduct, desiring to see how he will practise this encouraging recommendation: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart." "Let us, then," he concluded, "endeavour to repress anger by meekness, and bear contempt with humility, that He may not have

a right to complain, that we set little value on His words and example. Imagine to yourselves what would be the thoughts of a superior, if, when he was always the first at all the exercises, the others remained in their rooms; if he swept the house and washed the dishes, and the rest disdained to imitate him. This negligence on the part of his inferiors would certainly grieve him. Now, if a man, who is nothing, is displeased when his example is not followed, how could Jesus Christ be indifferent to the neglect of those He has set before us?"

Such were the holy reflections made by Father Balthasar, to arouse his courage, and he thus derived great profit from his troubles. Not content with excluding from his heart all anger and impatience against those who humbled him, he felt only love and gratitude towards them, as if he had received from them some great benefit. These noble sentiments had long been habitual to him. I will mention some circumstances previous to the time of which I am now speaking. A brother who waited upon him, having heard his conduct blamed by some of the Fathers, related it to him indignantly, saying that their judgments were unjust. "What are you saying?" cried out the holy Rector, interrupting him: "I respect these good Fathers, and look upon them as far better than myself: they confer on me too great a benefit to allow me to refuse them my gratitude." Later on, when he went to take possession of a college in which one of the

Fathers I have mentioned was staying, the same brother said: "I am glad he is there; for you may make him repent his conduct." "You are mistaken, brother," answered the humble Rector, "this Father will be the one I shall most respect and consult, in preference to the others." When he had taken possession of his office, recommending the minister to take care of all, he desired him to be careful that this Father wanted for nothing. The minister, who knew the wrong this Religious had done the Father Rector, asked him why he seemed more interested about him than the others. "Because I wish to gain his heart," replied the good Father, "and if I am not fortunate enough to succeed, I shall not love him the less." When some one in the same college told him of certain things said against him, instead of being offended, he smiled, and gave signs of great joy. The Religious, surprised, asked him the reason. "It is," said the Father, "because I thought God had forgotten me; but I see full well He has not, from what you tell me. It would seem that He even loves me more, as He treats me as one of His friends." On another occasion, when several Fathers of high consideration had made a serious complaint against him, he answered the person who informed him of it: "As this is the case, I shall recommend them every day specially to God in the holy sacrifice." He did so in effect; thus fulfilling to the letter the injunction of our Divine Master: "Pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you

may be the children of your Father Who is in heaven." (Matt. v. 44.) By this means he acquired so great a command over himself, that no painful event could disturb the peace of his soul.

This also explains the force and efficacy of his exhortations, when he spoke of humiliations and insults, encouraging his hearers to bear them, not only with patience, but with joy. It would have been difficult to be insensible to a recommendation, made by a man, who strengthened it by so bright an example. I will only mention one more fact, which is too interesting to be omitted. When he left Salamanca, to take possession of the college at Villa Garcia, he travelled on foot with several Fathers and a brother. A poor man who joined them having noticed the deference shown him by these other Fathers, wished to know who he was, and asked the brother with whom he was walking a little behind: "Who is this Father Superior?" "Father Balthasar Alvarez," answered the brother. "I suppose," said the traveller, "that he is the Rector of the college at Salamanca." "He was," said the brother, "but he is so no longer; he is going in the same capacity to Villa Garcia." "O!" said the man, surprised, "as he is sent from so large a town to a village, it would seem that he has not gained much honour." He meant that this exchange could be nothing but a banishment; hence he concluded that the Father must have done something foolish. He made this remark so loud, that the Father heard it. He felt great joy, and

said to his companions: "See now, this is what we may call meat without bones." This was his usual designation for humiliations without cause. It must be confessed that this kind of meat was never wanting to him, for all those which happened to him were inflicted, not only without reason, but for causes so holy that they should rather have gained him glory: this was his consolation, and it was so much the more pure, because he knew that his persecutors, led on by zeal, and excused by ignorance, humbled him without offending God.

CHAPTER XLI.

CAUSES OF THIS STORM—THE PRAYER OF SILENCE AND QUIET IS PLACED ON TRIAL—FATHER BALTHASAR DEFENDS IT—RESULT OF THIS DISPUTE.

Such is the malice of the enemy of our salvation, that, the better to deceive us, he sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light, and makes use of the gifts of God to tempt us, that they may become hurtful; and such also is our misery, that we are often deceived by his cunning; but in the same manner as he manifests his spite, by endeavouring to injure us by what is good, so God shows forth His power and goodness, by turning to our salvation the artifices he employs to make us lose our souls. This good

Master allows some indiscreet persons, led by a zeal that is not according to knowledge, to make a bad use of the frequentation of the sacraments, of prayer, and even of contemplation. We may, however, be assured that He intends thereby to work some great good, either to these mistaken persons, or to others who profit by their example. Sometimes, to try the patience and humility of a director, He allows his disciples to stray from the right path; for we know well that in the opinion of men, their disgrace falls on him who guided them, as if he approved their excesses or their ignorance. This was precisely what happened to Father Balthasar. Among his numerous disciples, a few were to be found who, without his knowledge, or in opposition to his teaching, did and said very unwise things regarding prayer. The result was, that men of learning and note, shocked at these errors, entertained suspicions concerning the doctrine of their master on this subject.

These suspicions were increased by the imprudence of some ignorant persons, who went so far as to depreciate prayer made through the understanding, pious affections and colloquies: saying that this method is good for children, as long as they are not able to fly with their own wings. "As for men," said they, "who have made some progress in prayer, they do much better to follow their attraction, their course is much more free. Is it not folly to wish to give rules to the Spirit of God? To Him it belongs to breathe where

He will, and as He will, and those whom He guides, have nothing to do but abandon themselves to His inspirations with perfect liberty." Nothing was more contrary to Father Balthasar's teaching. He had explained his ideas more than a hundred times in his public discourses, and besides, his own conduct gave a denial to this monstrous error. He confined himself for sixteen years to the method recommended by St. Ignatius, and attributed to this the gift of contemplation he afterwards received. And at the very time we are speaking of, whenever extraordinary graces failed him, he had recourse to meditation as a refuge. His adversaries could and should have known this: but God, who wished to try this holy man and humble him, caused them to forget it, and to neglect to question him on the matter. As the rumour of which I speak went on increasing, his immediate superiors ordered him to give an account of his doctrine regarding prayer to the Father General, who had already heard of this affair. The humble religious, always prompt in obedience, went at once to the country house, where he wrote the following treatise, in reply to seven difficulties proposed to him by his superiors, regarding the prayer of quiet and silence.

FIRST DIFFICULTY.

It is objected to me, that in this kind of prayer, in which the soul neither reasons or meditates, she

loses time, which might be usefully employed in practising virtues.

I answer, that in this kind of prayer, the soul, far from being idle, does on the contrary, great things; this was the opinion of St. Bernard, when he said that the prayer of repose is that which the Psalmist pointed out when he said: "Rest and see how sweet is the Lord." Thus thought St. Augustin also, as his words prove: "The charity of truth seeks holy repose." (City of God, 19.) It is also clear from the acts elicited by the soul in this exercise, that she is anything but idle. True it is that the understanding ceases to reason on particular mysteries, but the will does not remain inactive; she continues to produce affections in the presence of God, Whom she contemplates with the eyes of faith, adoring Him, admiring the perfections He manifests to her, rendering Him thanks, and delighting to see herself in presence of His Majesty. Sometimes she offers Him herself, her will, all that she is, and all that she possesses. Then she begs Him to give her Himself, and afterwards His favours, not to rest in them, but to make use of them as means to raise herself up to Him. At other times, she discloses her heart to Him in a few words, or even without words, for, as soon as a poor man presents himself before God, He knows his misery, and this misery speaks for him. The soul, then, in laying her wants before God, waits for the effusion of His mercy, but with entire resignation to His will, for she knows well that

she is unworthy of His benefits. Sometimes also she acts according to the different affections or lights, communicated to her by the Holy Ghost, the great Master of souls, then union takes place, which it suffices to mention here.

SECOND DIFFICULTY.

It would seem that he who abstains from meditating, in the expectation that God will speak to him or favour him with some inspiration, is guilty of the sin which is called tempting God. I answer, that beginners would indeed tempt God if they attempted to pray by affections alone, laying aside all reasoning, unless by a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, because this method is the perfection of that exercise. But if we speak of men who have meditated for a length of time, and only enter into this repose on the invitation of a heavenly light, it is not true to say that they tempt God. No, it is not tempting God to abstain from reasoning on particular truths relating to His perfections, or to our reformation, when we have done it sufficiently in the time past. Each exercise has its time, and each part of an exercise; thus, in meditation, the petitions and thanksgiving are not made until the end. Then, since it is God who calls certain souls to the prayer of quiet, it is no doubt pleasing to Him, that they employ themselves then, not in desiring or expecting revelations, but in contemplating His perfections, and producing affections in His holy presence.

The illusion would be, to enter into this prayer of one's own accord, without disposition or preparation. In that there would be a real tempting of God, and without any benefit, for the time would be sure to be spent uselessly. Besides, this illusion would not be lasting; pride would not be long in showing itself, or else an occupation which caused only disgust and weariness would be soon given up.

THIRD DIFFICULTY.

Is there no danger here, of taking for a call from God, the wish for consolations excited by self-love?

I answer, that it is easy to judge, by the effects, if this vocation comes from God, according to this rule of the Gospel: "The tree is known by its fruits." When this method of prayer is inspired by the Holy Ghost, it unites the heart to God, softens it, makes it submissive to the Divine will, and urges it to give to God whatever He asks of it, so that it willingly sacrifices for Him honours, conveniences, delights; understanding clearly that the happiness of having God for a friend, cannot be purchased at too dear a rate. It also feels, that when we refuse nothing to God, He is in some sort bound to grant all our requests, to give us all the graces we need. This prayer also inclines the soul to do all she can, to conform herself to Jesus Christ, her model, especially by despising herself, and sacrificing in all things her

will to the holy will of God. Whoever then experiences these, and similar effects, in this kind of prayer, may regard it as certain, that he has not entered into it of his own accord, but by the impulse of the Spirit of God.

FOURTH DIFFICULTY.

It is remarked that those who walk in this way are proud, without perhaps being aware of it, and prefer themselves before those who follow the ordinary method of prayer; hence it follows, that they adhere strongly to it, and will not submit to the judgment of superiors and directors, when they think fit to make them change their plan.

I answer, that when persons go astray in this manner, their method of prayer is not in fault, but their own imperfection, which it is well to reprove and correct. If the prayer of quiet were to be condemned for these abuses, meditation might be blamed for the same reason; for those who make use of the understanding are subject to the same defects, and sometimes even to greater. Is there anything, in fact, which inclines so much to vanity, as the penetration of the intellect and the power of carrying on an argument? Ah! if we were obliged to condemn all that is abused by men, I do not know what we could approve or permit. There would be nothing for it, but to give up prayer, frequentation of the sacraments, study, and the exercise of the sacred ministry. Who does not see that this is absurdity? I may

say as much of the right, which seems to be given to superiors and directors, to forbid this kind of prayer of which we speak, to those who practise it; for they could not disobey them without fault, nor obey them, if it be in their power, without disobeying God, Whom I suppose to be their guide in this path. I do not deny the right of superiors and directors to try their subjects thus; but I deny that they can, with a safe conscience, seriously forbid this method of prayer. Their duty, on the contrary, is to direct souls in the way in which God leads them, and by which they advance, when this way is a path that the saints have followed, and still follow in our day. As for persons who practise the prayer of quiet, without opposition from their superiors, it is evident that they may follow this method with all security, and prefer their judgment, in what regards themselves, to that of men who have no experience in it. How could there be any harm in this? Would a lawyer consult a man who had not studied law? Would an astronomer submit his judgment to that of a man who has not cultivated this science? Perhaps humility may be objected to me, but in vain; humility is not opposed to the knowledge a soul has of the graces God has granted her. "We have received the Spirit of God," said the apostle, "that we may know what are the gifts God has granted us." (1 Ep. Cor. ii. 12.)

FIFTH DIFFICULTY.

We meet with souls that give themselves up so completely to this kind of prayer, that they are scarcely ever, so to speak, out of an extasy, and neglect the duties of their state; taken up with the delights they enjoy in union, they neglect the practice of charity and obedience, do nothing to acquire true mortification and solid virtues, satisfied with passing for spiritual persons, without being really so. Do not speak to them of assisting their neighbour and labouring for the salvation of souls. For this, it would be necessary to renounce the delights they enjoy in contemplation. The sacrifice would be too great; and besides, God does not allow it. After all, such Religious are of no use to any one but themselves, they leave their neighbour without help, or they do not know how to assist him; for, as they cannot reason in prayer, they draw from it no truth that they can propose to others. To complete their illusion, they weaken their bodily strength, and render themselves incapable of discharging the obligations of their office.

Answer.—I do not deny that these defects proceed from the kind of prayer we are now discussing, but they are caused by the imprudence and indiscretion of those who practise it: hence, I conclude, that they should be admonished and corrected. It is indeed certain that they are under an illusion, if, satisfied with their spiritual

repose, they neglect mortification and the acquisition of solid virtues; it is also beyond doubt, that they ought to relinquish contemplation to fulfil the duties of their office, or assist the wants of their neighbour; it is also most true that they ought to take care of their bodily strength, but when they have satisfied charity and obedience, why should they not devote themselves to contemplation, avoiding the danger of injuring their health, which, after all, has more to fear from reasoning than from repose? If it be not so, tell me how the Saints, who practised this kind of prayer, were able to prolong it for almost entire days? This has never been done, and never could be done by those who give themselves to meditation. If in the prayer of quiet, fewer truths are represented in detail, more virtue is acquired, which is more pleasing to God, and no less useful to souls. Study may also supply for the knowledge of truths, of which they may stand in need, and the fervour gained in contemplation helps to propose them in a more moving and persuasive manner.

SIXTH DIFFICULTY.

It is to be feared, not to say, to be believed, that men, thus absorbed in contemplation, forget the Saints, neglect vocal prayer, and are indifferent to the necessities of the Church and of individuals.

I answer, that contemplatives, far from neglecting these holy practices, esteem them more than

others, because they are the means by which they have acquired the blessings they enjoy in repose. Ordinary souls, it is true, spend more time in vocal prayer, because their directors require it, seeing them less capable of mental prayer; but it must not be forgotten, that the chief end of prayer is to inflame devotion, which is much more easily done by mental prayer, and especially by the kind now attacked. This was the opinion of St. Thomas of Aquin, when he said that "vocal prayer, when not of precept, should be interrupted as soon as the soul feels herself strongly moved." What is the use of insisting on the means, when the end is obtained, and we have nothing to do but to enjoy its delights? This explains why souls that have grown old in prayer, make less use of vocal prayer than beginners, and than they themselves did at first. It is not that they disdain it, or esteem it less; but that prayer having rendered them more spiritual, they have no great need of external assistance to enkindle their affections. Thus, we read in the life of St. Ignatius, that, in reciting his office, he was stopped, in spite of himself, by the divine consolations his fervour brought upon him. This went so far that the Pope, solicited by his companions, dispensed him from it; otherwise he would have had to give up all his works, for the day scarcely sufficed to him for the fulfilment of this single obligation. He therefore discontinued vocal prayer, but not mental; which, however, he knew how to interrupt, when necessary, to fulfil these duties. It is unjust to

accuse contemplatives of asking nothing for the Church, or for any one. The very act of their prayer is a more efficacious request, than any formal petition; for the more pleasing a work is to God, the more is it impetratory. Who would venture to deny that a prayer, which is an act of love, appeals most powerfully to the liberality of God? That is enough; for He knows perfectly well the wishes of the person that contemplates Him, and the wants of those whom He wishes to relieve. He perceives clearly his own necessities, but does not speak of them to God, because he is wholly occupied with the wish to please Him. Though this man makes no express request, this good Master grants whatever he would ask Him; otherwise we might say that He is less liberal than earthly masters. Where is the rich man, who possesses a devoted and diligent servant, and who does not make it a duty to relieve his wants without waiting for him to explain them? Besides, the contemplative is not always in contemplation; when he is obliged to follow the ordinary course, there is nothing to prevent his forming petitions like others, but he is right not to occupy himself with them, when God prevents him with the blessings of His sweetness. All masters agree, that the soul should then be wholly absorbed in the visit of her God, without thinking of anything else, however good; and the reason they give for this is, that this is what God requires at the present moment; and that in regard of perfection,

it is a real illusion to occupy ourselves with one thing, when God is inspiring us with another.

SEVENTH DIFFICULTY.

It cannot at any rate be denied, that this method of prayer leads us away from the method prescribed by St. Ignatius, and followed by all his children. Now this singularity is anything but suited to community life.

It is easy to answer this last objection. There is no opposition, I think, between the means and the end, between the effect and the cause; now the prayer prescribed by St. Ignatius is the means, and contemplation is the end. Meditation operates as a cause, and repose follows as an effect. Thus, as long as the Holy Ghost does not move the soul, by a special inspiration, to the kind of prayer in question, she should adhere to the ordinary method: but when the toil of meditation brings the repose of contemplation, what necessity is there for continuing to labour? A traveller does not walk for the sake of walking; he walks to arrive at his journey's end, and then to rest. The doctrine of St. Ignatius is objected against me, and I will oppose his example to the ideas of my opponents; for it is said in his life, that after seeking in meditation, he ended by enjoying in contemplation what he had found; and in a state, rather passive than active, he tasted the sweets of repose, like a traveller who has reached his journey's end. I do not dispute that the

common method should be prescribed to all beginners; but if God, by a special favour, introduces any one into the prayer of quiet, instead of being withdrawn from it, that person should be assisted to continue in it. I say the same of those, who, after applying for many years to meditation, have attained this kind of prayer, as precious as it is extraordinary; and I add, that when a director meets with souls, that have not yet entered into this repose, but show themselves disposed for it, he will do well to advise them not to give up meditation, but to diminish by little and little the exercise of the understanding, to give more time to the affections, in order to correspond with grace which is urging them. Is not this what St. Ignatius teaches, in his additions, when he says, that as soon as we find in one point the devotion we are in search of, we must remain there as long as the feeling continues, without being anxious to pass on? Why should not the same advice be given to those, who through weakness of mind or weariness of head, cannot spend much time in reasoning? Now, I maintain, that this is not introducing division into community life, for it is merely progress in the kind of prayer common to all; and this is the gradation usually followed in this exercise. Beginners, who devote more time to reasoning, nevertheless produce some affections; those who are advancing without giving up reasoning, give more to the affections: and the perfect, for the most part, spend the whole time in a loving repose. This

seems singular, because it rarely occurs; but do we not know that perfect souls are always the fewest in number? There is, therefore, no cause for surprise that some walk in this special way; for they are souls that God wishes to enrich with His precious gifts, and He does not do this in regard of souls that are satisfied to walk in the ordinary path.

This is the substance of what Father Balthasar wrote, and he concluded it by these lines, addressed to the Father Visitor: "I entreat your reverence, by the love you bear to God and your desire to please Him, to read this exposition of my teaching regarding the prayer of quiet, to examine it severely, and to make known to me, and to the other Fathers of the province, what we must believe and reject in this matter, that we may be able to guide those chosen souls who may address themselves to us in the way of truth. I am waiting for your judgment as that of God, and the expression of His holy will." The result of this trial was favourable to the humble Religious; and it could scarcely be otherwise, for God delights in defending those who bear crosses patiently and in silence, abandoning to His goodness the care of their interests. This good Master enlightened the minds of his superiors so that they recognized his innocence, not only from the force of his arguments, but still more from the edifying humility, of which he had given proof during the whole of this affair. There is not, in fact, a better proof in favour of an accused man, than his humble

and silent patience, for nothing but a good conscience can give this strength of soul, this confidence in God, this imperturbable tranquillity. The Father Visitor, struck with the submission with which the pious Rector had given up his manuscripts, and the moderation he had shown in his defence, did not conceal his admiration, and said he had never met with anything so edifying in the course of his visits. As for the Father General, though he thought it necessary to modify the application of this doctrine, as we shall see in the following chapter, he conceived so high an esteem for Father Balthasar, that he very soon confided to him two offices equally important and honourable.

CHAPTER XLII.

ADVANTAGES AND SECURITY OF THE METHOD OF PRAYER, WHICH IS COMPOSED OF REASONING, AFFECTIONS, AND COLLOQUIES.

It would be an abuse of what we have just said, regarding the prayer of quiet, were we to conceive a lower opinion of the ordinary kind, and give it up by no authority but our own. For this reason I think it useful to give here the reasons, which should induce my readers to walk in this path, by way of reasoning, pious affections, petitions and colloquies. If the importance of the subject be

considered, I shall be excused, I am sure, for the length of the explanation I am going to give.

Mental prayer is an operation of the intellect enlightened by faith. The end of this operation is to attain that sublime knowledge, of which Jesus Christ has said, "This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom Thou hast sent, Jesus Christ." "Hæc est vita æterna, ut cognoscant te, solum Deum verum, et quem misisti Jesum Christum." (St. John xvii. 3.) The means of acquiring perfectly this double knowledge, can be only perfect contemplation, in which God and Jesus Christ manifest themselves, as clearly as is possible, to faith; but all are not capable of it, and though God sometimes grants this favour to souls that have done nothing to merit it, nevertheless it would be tempting Him to ask or hope such a favour, without endeavouring to possess the necessary dispositions to obtain it. These dispositions, as St. Augustine, St. Bernard, and St. Thomas tell us, are meditation, prayer, and spiritual reading. This is easily understood; for by reading Holy Scripture, we learn what eternal life is; and the works of the Saints are only commentaries on these sacred books. By meditating on the divine mysteries, and penetrating as far as possible into their depths, and passing from one to another, we come to understand them better, and the lights obtained from heaven by prayer, place these holy truths in the clearest light possible out of contemplation. Every Christian then who wishes to become a

contemplative, must employ these three means; otherwise he will lose his time in rash and arrogant desires. But this is not all; to the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, the spiritual man must add the knowledge of himself, of his miseries, his sins, and their grievousness; but though nothing is so near him as himself, he will not gain this knowledge, except by penetrating into his nothingness by meditation, seeing clearly his dangers, calculating his losses, and counting up his debts towards the Divine Majesty. It is also necessary, that he extend his reasoning to his four last ends, that he consider what will happen to him at death, at the particular and general judgment; that he go down to hell and purgatory to see what passes there; that he ascend to heaven to contemplate the glory and happiness of the Saints. Self-knowledge depends on all these truths; without the labour of meditation, we do not understand them sufficiently, at least in an ordinary way. And do not say, that for this it is enough to ask light of God. This was the favourite prayer of St. Augustine: "Lord, grant me grace to know Thee, and to know myself." "Domine, noverim Te, et noverim me." But did he confine himself to this petition? No, certainly. He employed for the attaining of this knowledge, meditations, which he has left for those whose incapacity requires to be assisted in this research. And the exercise of the intellect alone is not sufficient to attain it; prayer must dispose the will to elicit acts of the love of God, of sorrow

for sin, resignation to the decrees of Heaven and others. Without doubt, God, Who is all-powerful, could easily move our will by the force of His inspirations, and make it produce acts pleasing to Him; but according to the ordinary rule, He wishes meditation to arouse in us these affectionate emotions; therefore, he who is content with placing himself before God, leaving it to Him to move his will as He pleases, will generally be disappointed in his hopes; not only will he be destitute of every feeling of devotion, but he will be thoroughly dry and distracted, and will lose his time in complete idleness. This is easily understood; for as it is necessary to heap up wood, to arrange it, and to blow upon the coals to enkindle the fire, and make it burn, so is it necessary to make a collection of truths by reading; to arrange them methodically by meditation, and to blow the furnace of holy desires, that the fire of divine love, of contrition, and of other virtues may be enkindled. This made St. Basil say, that the ardent, firm, and constant desire of pleasing God, is excited by meditation, and the consideration of God's perfections, and of the benefits we have received from Him.

We will add, that to pray is to confer with God, regarding the important affair of our salvation. Though the Holy Ghost teaches us to ask with unspeakable groanings, though the tongue of our souls, as St. Bernard says, is nothing but devotion which is a gift of God, we must have recourse to meditation, in the ordinary way at least, to obtain

both the one and the other. Yes; there it is that devotion is found, that the soul learns to pray, to discern the graces that she ought particularly to ask for, to perceive the reasons most likely to move the heart of God, and to choose the offerings that will be most pleasing to Him. All this proceeds naturally from the mystery which occupies us, and the reasoning we form upon it. Hence, it may be inferred, that it is well to make meditation precede vocal prayer, if we wish it to be very devout and attentive, and to produce abundant fruits.

But the advantages of mental prayer do not end here. Another of its effects, no less important, is the reformation of our lives by the mortification of our passions and vices, and the exercise of virtues: a precious labour which leads to repose; for it disposes the soul for perfect contemplation when reasoning is at an end. Such is the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas. "Meditation," says this holy doctor, "leads to the exercise of the moral virtues; by these, in their turn, the passions are moderated, and thus the soul is disposed for perfect contemplation." Cardinal Cajetan, one of his commentators, has given an explanation of these words which merits to be quoted; these are his words: "If directors wish to procure great spiritual advantages for their disciples, and lead them to contemplation, let them carefully train them in the practices of the active life. To attain this sublime repose, it is first of all necessary, that the soul should aim at overcoming her

passions, by the habits of humility, liberality, meekness, patience, &c. This truth is too little known. This is the reason why we meet with so many spiritual men, who leap rather than walk in the ways of God; and find themselves, after a long exercise of contemplation, as full of defects as novices, and devoid of virtues; hence, it would seem that their life has been neither really active, nor really contemplative. In reality they have done nothing, and their edifice, built on moving sand, cannot fail to fall to ruins." I need not continue these quotations. It is enough to say that this is the doctrine of all spiritual masters. It is then a general rule, that all should proceed by the use of meditation in the reformation of their vices, and the acquisition of virtues: hence it follows, that they who enter into the repose of contemplation without having laid this foundation, and without a special movement of grace, are in a complete illusion; and their prayer should not be called a prayer of repose, but of idleness. As for the results, I cannot compare them to anything better than what happens to a bird, that leaves its nest too soon. Not being strong enough to fly, it cannot support itself in the air or regain the nest; it falls to the ground and is killed. To speak plainly, men of this kind, not being able either to meditate, or to keep themselves in the presence of God, only drag themselves in the dust of earthly thoughts. That is so true, that true contemplatives themselves, cannot without imprudence, wholly abandon the exercise of meditation;

for the movement of God, which raises them to repose, is not always felt, and then they must return to ordinary prayer, like vessels, which must be moved by means of oars, when the wind falls that filled their sails.

Besides, is it not fitting that all spiritual men should conform to the spirit of the Church in the festivals she celebrates? But how can they do so, if they have lost the habit of meditating on similar subjects? They will have no light and no sentiment of devotion, and if they are required to speak of these festivals, they will do it in a cold and feeble manner; for to move others, we must first be moved ourselves, which is the result not of study, but of devout meditation. All then should be ready to meditate on these pious subjects in the ordinary way, if contemplative light should fail on such occasions.

Those who walk in this path cannot be too strongly urged to the acquisition of solid virtues, in order to keep their ground against inconstancy, and to be able to stand firm against the storms of temptation. Those who rely only upon the affections, tenderness, and sweetness of prayer show little firmness in trials; because these graces are transitory, and soon pass away. For this reason St. Bernard said to Pope Eugenius, "Do not make too much account of the consolations that you experience, and above all, do not rely upon them; for sensible devotion does not last long, and is often replaced by the contrary." What I call solid virtue, is that which is supported

by strong reasons that convince the understanding, and by whose light illusions are discovered, from whatever cause they proceed. These reasons and these lights may be found, it is true, in contemplation when God calls us to it; but it is certain that, according to ordinary rules, they are only obtained by profound meditations on the mysteries of faith.

Those who seek perfect virtues in ordinary, or extraordinary prayer, should carefully detach themselves from their own ideas and judgment,—and never prescribe to God the time of His visits and the rule of His mercy. It would be unsafe to say: "Such a person has long been preparing her soul; she has then received such an extraordinary favour, she has attained such a degree of virtue, she has reached such a point in contemplative prayer." On this account, Cassian is blamed for promising perfect chastity to those who should follow his counsels for a given time. Heavenly gifts and progress in virtue depend much less on our skill, our efforts, and our time, than on God's good pleasure; because it belongs to grace and to a special providence to distribute these favours to whom He wills, when He wills, and as He wills. I cannot therefore repeat too often to beginners, that it is of great consequence that they should follow the beaten path, and correspond with fervour to ordinary direction, and ordinary graces, removing obstacles, and using the means prescribed. This is their work; as for entrance into extraordinary ways and progress in them,

let them not trouble themselves about it, it belongs to God; to Him alone belongs the right of saying to His servants: "Friend, go up higher." "Amice, ascende superius."

Let us then draw this conclusion from what has been said; that all who aim at perfection, whether they be priests, religious, or laymen, should begin and continue their course by the way of meditation, until God, by a special vocation, raise them to a higher degree of prayer; but as soon as this vocation is certain, it must be faithfully followed. To wish to ascend to contemplation without being drawn to it, and to resist the attraction when God gives it, are two extremes, between which truth and virtue are found. If we fear to be deceived by taking an illusion for an attraction, which danger exists, let us then consult an enlightened director, and follow his advice. This consultation should be made even in ordinary prayer, for there is great variety in this path. From some the Holy Ghost requires meditation on terrifying subjects; from others, meditation on the mysteries of our Saviour's life; and of these, some are drawn to meditate His Passion, others His holy infancy. Some have a greater liking for His hidden life, others for His public life. Others again derive much profit from meditating on the divine benefits. Experience proves, that subjects which correspond with our attraction, occupy the mind more fully, and act more powerfully on the heart. Directors should then be very careful to conduct each one in his own little way, because

their whole ministry consists in making souls follow the paths traced by our Lord's will. "We are only the assistants of God," said the Apostle. "Dei adjutores sumus." As for souls that have no special attraction, they must be made to follow general rules, directing their efforts and industry towards the ends of prayer that we have named; namely, the knowledge of God, of Jesus Christ, and of themselves; the reformation of their defects, the victory over their passions, and the exercise of virtues.

CHAPTER XLIII.

CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

The doctrine I have just laid down, is the same that is taught in the Book of the Exercises of St. Ignatius, a book most highly approved by Sovereign Pontiffs, in consequence of the wonderful fruits it has produced from the very first. Why is it so little known in our days, and why do directors make so little use of it? In this admirable book, everything is to be found that it is useful to know regarding the beginning, progress, and consummation of prayer; both in regard of grace which prevents and excites us, and of the care and industry we should employ to co-operate with it. Here we learn the preparation that should be made for this holy exercise, the mysteries to be

meditated upon, the rules that should be followed in reasoning, which are necessary for penetrating into them, the affections to be drawn from them, the colloquies we should hold with God, the fruit we should derive, and the progress at which we should aim; in a word, the road that is to be followed to attain the highest contemplation.

As a finish to what I have said on this subject, I have only to give a few reasons, calculated to inspire my readers with a wish to practise the method of prayer, laid down in this valuable book. I will briefly point them out.

1st. To these precious exercises the companions of St. Ignatius, and the saint himself owed their eminent sanctity. Since that time, how many illustrious servants of God have derived their eminent virtues from the same source.

2nd. We know from trustworthy authority, that these Exercises were revealed by God Himself to their author, not for himself alone, but to furnish all who should make use of them, with most powerful weapons against the enemy of souls. What fruits of salvation have they not produced in all states and conditions! If I do not undertake to detail them, it is because they are innumerable.

3rd. I may here mention a special revelation, supported by the authority of him whose life I am writing. Let us hear him relate this interesting anecdote.

"Among the many souls, gifted with sublime prayer that I have met with in the course of my

life, there was one to whom Jesus Christ, and His Blessed Mother, granted extraordinary favours. I only knew them from herself: but I have confidence in her testimony, and I may say, that I am as certain of her sincerity, as it is possible to be in such cases. She related to me the following fact. Having heard that I was going to make my annual retreat, she also resolved to make one in her house, as well as she could. One morning, during her prayer, she saw, with the eyes of her soul, a most majestic angel, who drew near her and said: 'I am the Archangel Gabriel. The Queen of Heaven has sent me to salute you, and make to you an important communication.' This person, who was very humble, was greatly astonished at such a visit, and fearing some treachery, replied: 'Before I receive your communication I beg you to allow me, to ask of God in what light He regards it.' 'Very well,' answered the holy Archangel, 'I approve too highly your humility and prudent diffidence to be hurt by it; consult God as long as you like, I will wait.' The pious woman addressed herself therefore to God, thinking no more of the angel than if he had not been there, and humbling herself profoundly before Him, begged Him to make known to her, what confidence she should place in what this messenger had to say to her. The answer having been satisfactory, she no longer doubted the truth of his mission, and kneeling down before him, awaited with great respect his communication.

Then the holy archangel said, 'This retreat which you are making according to the rules of the holy founder of the Society of Jesus, is very pleasing to our Queen. She has commissioned me to tell you, that these spiritual exercises are partly her work, because it was at her inspiration, and, so to speak, from her dictation that this holy man wrote them, and that she was occupied in them during her whole life.' When this pious woman made this revelation known to me, I had no difficulty in believing it, knowing perfectly well her good sense and veracity, and being also aware that she was in the habit of receiving heavenly lights. I understood also that this revelation was not meant for herself alone, but for all who should perform these spiritual exercises, that they might esteem them more highly, and undertake them more fervently, convinced that they have in some degree, the Mother of God as their author and protectress."

4th. It is to be observed, that the methods of prayer taught in this book, are suited to all that aim at perfection, so that any one whatsoever, religious, secular, or ecclesiastic, may make use of it as a universal instrument, either to gain souls to God, or for his own sanctification. What thanks do we not all owe to God, who know the value of these precious Exercises! With their help nothing is wanting to us, to pray well, to acquire virtues, and correct our defects. With them there is no deception to be feared, the path they open to us is straight, and we may walk in

it with perfect security. This I have already proved: but the point cannot be too much insisted upon. He who regulates himself according to the principles laid down in this book, is guided by God Himself; for he has the approbation of the Church, to which Jesus Christ has said, "I am with you all days, unto the consummation of the world;" "go and teach," "he who hears you, hears Me." O how much more secure is this way of authority, than that of our own private judgment! The man who is guided by his own wisdom, has no other assurance that he is in the right way, than the feelings he experiences, and nothing can be more fallacious. How many men have we not seen, calling themselves spiritual, who have been deceived as to their state by vain consolations and deceitful delights. "I can give a terrible example of this," said Father Suarez one day to us, "which I witnessed myself. I was sent by the inquisitors to the prison of one of the Illuminati, to endeavour to reclaim him to true Catholic principles. When I had said to him all I thought capable of enlightening his mind, and touching his heart, he answered me: 'I feel obliged to you, for your kind intentions; for it is clear to me, that you desire my good. You tell me that my salvation is the object of your desires; I assure you in my turn, that I sincerely desire yours, but we cannot come to an understanding about the means. I believe that I shall be saved by taking my interior feelings as a guide, and I do not think it necessary to sacri-

fice them to the authority of the Church.' Then he began to quote to me various passages of the Gospel in the most moving tone and with tears. 'We are persecuted,' he said, 'but blessed be God, who consoles us amidst our tribulations; we are desired to listen to the Church, but the Holy Ghost Himself bears testimony to our minds that we are the sons of God.' The unfortunate man deceived himself, taking the deceptions of the spirit of lies, for God's consolations, and the testimony he heard within himself was only that of his pride. Never had I so deeply felt the happiness of being led by obedience."

Father John of Avila, after a long exercise of prayer, with no other guide than himself, though he was very humble, acknowledged that instead of following the right path, he had gone astray on several occasions. He made this acknowledgment to me, adding. "How happy are you Religious, to live under obedience! No other way is safe, and this is so great a grace that you can never thank God too much for it." With regard to the method of prayer prescribed by the Exercises, here is an extract from the valuable teaching laid down there, or easily deduced from it by reasoning.

1st. Though the Creator can console His creature without any preparatory disposition, His ordinary rule is to confer this grace only on those who give the co-operation of their own efforts. It is to souls that endeavour to overcome temptations, to correct their defects, and repress their

passions, that He grants the blessing of devotion, and that hidden Manna which fills the heart with ineffable delight.

2nd. Though charity is the beginning, the progress, and the consummation of the spiritual life, it does not act in the same manner in all: to beginners it inspires acts of mortification and penance; to those who are advancing, the imitation of the virtues of Jesus Christ in His life and Passion; to the perfect, acts of love, and joy and admiration at the sight of the perfections of God, and the amiable qualities of His adorable Son.

3rd. When any virtue is predominant in the heart, it knows how to draw nourishment from everything. For instance, a soul in which humility or contrition predominates, finds food for both in the glorious mysteries of our Saviour's life, and even in the consideration of the divine perfections. Thus, St. Francis Borgia, whose humility was admirable, found occasions of humiliation and confusion in all things, and in all events of whatsoever kind. As for us, if we do not possess, as is most probable, any predominant virtue, our meditations and efforts must be directed towards that which we feel to be most necessary for us.

4th. The matter and form of the Spiritual Exercises belong either to the purgative, the illuminative, or the unitive way; that is, they must tend either to purify or perfect the soul, or to complete the work of sanctification, by the indispensable help of divine grace. The book of the

Exercises offers us in the first week the exercises of the first way, in the second and third, those which correspond to the second, and in the fourth, those which belong to the third way.

5th. As to the method of proceeding: it is necessary, 1st. to prepare for prayer carefully, according to these words of the wise man: "Ante orationem præpara animam tuam." And the reason he gives is, that to act otherwise is to tempt God. "Et noli esse quasi homo qui tentat Deum." (Eccl. xviii. 23.) This will be done well, if the additions and rules given by St. Ignatius be observed, with the use of the daily examens in the manner pointed out by the same Saint. 2nd. It is necessary during prayer, to apply ourselves to the exercise of the three powers, by recalling to mind the points of the mystery which is the subject of meditation, by reasoning on the truths it contains, by exciting the will to produce corresponding acts, by applying the interior senses in tasting the sweetness of virtue, and the bitterness of vice; according to the lights and sentiments granted us by the Holy Ghost.

6th. It is of great consequence during this exercise, not to lose sight of the end of prayer, and the fruit that may be drawn from it. This recommendation is often repeated in the book of which I am speaking; and its extreme importance induces me to support it by five observations. 1st. The whole time of prayer must not be taken up with general considerations, such as the importance of humility, the excellence of charity. The

soul, after reflecting sufficiently on these subjects, must turn her attention on herself, to see her wants, to consult with herself, and determine on some means of advancement, to ask help from God, and repeat several times the resolution she has come to: otherwise, she would remain what she was before. Can a general take a fortified town by firing in the air? No, but by directing his artillery against the walls. 2nd. It is necessary, in the ordinary way at least, to follow the prescribed method. No doubt it is good to spend the time of prayer in considering God's perfections, and eliciting suitable acts: but if the passions be still strong and unmortified, the soul should occupy herself with acts capable of moderating them, otherwise it is to be feared that she will be deceived by the devil, and take acts of self-love for acts of the love of God; and may end in deception an exercise, begun only to arrive at the truth. 3rd. It must not be forgotten, that the fruit to be drawn from meditation, is the reformation of our lives, according to these words of the Gospel: "A good tree brings forth good fruit." 4th. We must be very careful to carry out the resolutions we have taken, notwithstanding the repugnances of nature, encouraging ourselves by the remembrance of these words spoken by Jesus Christ Himself: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence; and the violent only bear it away." "Regnum cœlorum vim patitur, et violenti rapiunt illud." (St. Math. xi. 12.) Heaven is to be won by good works; but for this, we must combat our

passions and do violence to ourselves. 5th. In one word, what is most necessary to a man of prayer is, to remove from his path everything that hinders his spiritual progress, or that prevents him from acquiring the virtue he stands in need of.

CHAPTER XLIV.

FATHER BALTHASAR IS APPOINTED VISITOR OF THE PROVINCE OF ARRAGON.—HE THERE FINDS BROTHER JOHN XIMENEZ—ADMIRES HIS VIRTUES AND WRITES HIS HISTORY.

It is customary in the Society to send visitors to all the provinces to examine the state of affairs, remedy abuses, and give an account of all things to the Father General. It would belong to him to make these visits, were he able to do so; but as he is not, he delegates in his place men of consideration for their virtue and learning. Such was the good opinion he had conceived of Father Balthasar, after the trial of which we have spoken, that he entrusted him with this confidential office in the province of Arragon. This commission grieved him; but he set off at once in compliance with obedience, and made a visitation, worthy to serve as a model for all who may follow him. When the Father General had read his account, he said to those present: "Of our sixteen visitors

this is the most able." The Father's first care was to dispose, as far as possible, the minds of the local superiors, to make them approve the necessary reforms. He then endeavoured to be the first to practise what he had prescribed, an excellent means of gaining great influence and making it agreeable. Where are the inferiors who can refuse to perform, not only with exactness, but even with joy, what they see done by their superior? But it was his sanctity more than anything else, that gave him the necessary authority to succeed in his office. Every one admired his virtues. His superiors themselves were greatly struck by them, and conceived so high an esteem for him, that they easily entered into his views. One, in particular, contracted the most intimate friendship with him; this was the Father Provincial, Peter Villaluio. This Religious was very spiritual, and of admirable simplicity. He therefore gained Father Balthasar's attention, and, after the visit, he said openly, that the Provincial was a saint. These two men, as we see, could not fail to understand each other, and, in fact, they saw things with the same eyes and came to the same judgment; a happy circumstance, which secured the good begun by the visitor. This harmony was less the effect of Father Villaluio's wisdom, than of his extreme confidence in the lights and virtues of the holy man. Every word that came from the mouth of this earthly angel, was for him an oracle from heaven, and his maxims, both as to direc-

tion and government, as so many first principles.

Before he undertook the visitation of a college, Father Balthasar did not fail to arrange it, so to speak, with God, entreating Him to make it result to His greater glory, and the good of those whom he was going to visit, and this communication was not the work of a moment; he continued it for eight days without speaking to any one. This conduct was a subject of admiration to those who witnessed it. "This visitor," they said, "is a saint; we have never seen one like him." Hence they felt for him an esteem, respect, and confidence, which made them earnestly wish for the time when they should be able to open their hearts to him. They kept nothing from him, and gave themselves up into his hands, with the disposition to do all he should require from them, rightly judging, that a man so closely united to God, could not fail to lead others in the right way. When he had once placed himself at their disposal, his room was constantly open to them, and all were at liberty to tell him what they thought useful for their spiritual good. He made no difference between the old and the young, between the Fathers and brothers. He listened to them in silence, never interrupting them, and never showing any weariness; afterwards he gave the advice he thought useful. Not content with providing for their actual wants, he extended his view to the future, with a truly prophetic spirit. I know from one of the Religious who thus mani-

fested to him their interior, that he warned him of certain events to come, that were verified to the letter.

After providing for the wants of each, he gave public exhortations to all, which produced the greatest fruit, and when he left them, their regret was as deep as it was sincere, both on account of the good he had done them, and the affection they had for him.

In his visit to the college of Saragossa, God granted him a great consolation in the discovery He allowed him to make of a hidden treasure. I allude to Brother John Ximenez, a man of eminent sanctity, which he knew how to conceal perfectly from the eyes of men. John was born in the village of Viar, amidst the mountains that surround Valencia. Having resolved, by the advice of a holy hermit, to enter the Society, he went to offer himself to the Father Rector in the college of that town. He then received two indications of the truth of his vocation and of his election to high sanctity. When he had travelled nearly half the distance, the devil strongly tempted him to turn back, telling him that it was cruelty to deprive his poor parents of the fruit of his labours, and that by working to support them, he would make a much more acceptable sacrifice to God; but, enlightened by the grace of God, he at once cried out: "I promise thee, O Lord, to go and serve these Fathers for the love of Thee. I promise to do nothing henceforward but from the motive of pleasing Thee. To whom can I better

consecrate my life than to Thee my Master and my God?" Scarcely had he uttered these words than the temptation vanished, and he went on. When he arrived at the college, he was presented to the Father Provincial, from whom he asked admission into the Society. The Father, having taken the advice of consultors, as is the custom, they were at first inclined to refuse him. Then, perceiving that the Father Provincial was inclined to admit him, they deliberated a second time, then a third, but the conclusion was always that this man was not fitted for the Society. The Provincial, urged by a heavenly inspiration, said to them, making use of an expression familiar to him, "In the truth of the thing, we are going to receive him to make a saint of him, for that seems to be his vocation." He admitted him, and the event proved that his words had been truly prophetic. Shortly after he was sent to Saragossa, and appointed to take care of the country house called Jésus-du-Mont. There he spent his life employed in hard work like a slave, and only came to the college to bring wood or provisions. God permitted him to be tried by false witness borne against him, but he knew how to turn all to the good of his soul; loving mortification, he cheerfully accepted the most laborious work; profoundly humble, he carefully concealed the signal favours granted him by God; and though he was generally considered to be a good Religious, he was far from being appreciated or esteemed as he deserved. But his merit could not escape the eyes of the

Father Visitor. This enlightened and experienced man, by the first simple opening of his heart, perceived the rich treasure hidden in the soul of this good brother. He conferred with him on spiritual things, and made him return to him several times, through the pleasure he felt in hearing him relate the mercies God had shown him. The Fathers, having noticed the long and frequent audiences he gave to this simple man, and not understanding the reason, expressed their surprise to him more than once, but he paid no attention to them, and continued his communications with him, deriving edification from his manifestations, making him observe the goodness of God towards him, and preparing him to receive still greater gifts. At last, being unwilling that this pearl should still remain hidden, he discovered it to the Religious of the house, who were all astonishment that they should have so long possessed such a treasure without knowing it. I should not say that he made known to them this hidden pearl, he merely called their attention to him by these words: "I have learned from this brother excellent things regarding prayer, which I did not know before." But he made known later, what he thought it necessary to keep to himself at that time, as we shall see. This good brother was drawing near the end of his course, and did not live much longer. After his death, one of the Fathers wrote to Father Balthasar, not only to announce it to him, but to beg him to make known to them what

he himself knew of the deceased man's virtues. This was his answer.

LETTER OF FATHER BALTHASAR ALVAREZ, VISITOR OF THE PROVINCE OF ARRAGON, TO THE FATHERS AND BROTHERS OF THE COLLEGE OF SARAGOSSA.

I know very little of the holy life of Brother Ximenez, but what I do know is at any rate certain, as I learned it from his own mouth. This servant of God, unknown to the world, but well known to Jesus Christ, and very dear to His Heart, possessed sublime virtues, well calculated to serve us for examples. Some regarded God, others himself; others his superiors and his neighbour.

In regard of Almighty God, I will first speak of his great confidence, which was a support to him in his labours, and a refuge in dangers and trials. This confidence arose from the experience he had of God's mercy, and from his prompt obedience in executing whatever he knew to be His will. I will relate an interesting anecdote which to me appears miraculous; it will prove that he who hopes in God is never confounded, according to these words of Holy Writ: "No one ever hoped in God and was confounded." "Nullus speravit in Domino et confusus est." (Eccli. ii. 11.) His superior having charged him with a commission that obliged him to traverse the Ebro, when the waters were very high, he saw the danger, and thought it right to make it known to the superior, but as he still insisted, he obeyed. His fear was well

grounded, for scarcely had he began to ford the river than the mule, which carried him and drew his cart, lost its footing and was borne away by the current. Seeing his death at hand, unless a miracle interposed, Ximenez said to our Lord with that confidence that never forsook him: "O my God! I have no human resource left to escape this danger, my fate is in Thy hands, and my life depends on a miracle; but obedience makes it necessary, because, as Thou knowest, I warned my superior of this danger, not wishing to tempt Thee." Wonderful to relate, at these words, his mule, raising itself on its feet like a man, turned back towards the bank, and regained it. Wishing to belong entirely to God here below, he prayed for a long time most ardently for this grace, and this good Master granted him very powerful means to attain this end. He gave him first, great detachment from earthly things, through which he enjoyed such peace that he used to say: "As soon as a heart has detached itself from creatures, and given itself without reserve to God, the gifts of Heaven descend upon it in such abundance that it can scarcely contain them." The second means was a profound peace, full of consolation in all kinds of events. Later on, so perfect a union of his spirit with this object of his love, that he never lost sight of Him, so to speak, for a single instant. And lastly, a prayer full of delights, with the power of dispensing with sleep, so that he could profit by the silence and repose of night to give himself up to it as he pleased.

He slept however; for the exhaustion of his strength, in his laborious work, made it necessary for him; but a sleep of three or four hours was enough, and he took this repose in his clothes with the leave of his superiors, to economise the time required for taking them off and putting them on again. For the sake also of his prayer, he was careful to take sufficient every night at supper, for he knew that to a man who is employed in hard work, food is an assistance to prayer instead of a hindrance. He used to say pleasantly on this subject: "It is not the cart that draws the horses, but the horses that draw the cart, and they cannot do it without eating." At two o'clock in the morning he was up, and he went at once to the flat roof of a tower, where he remained in prayer until the time of Mass. It seemed that he there received great consolations, for he several times advised me to try this place in order to experience what took place there. His most ordinary subject of prayer was our Blessed Lord's Passion, and he drew from it such lively sentiments of devotion, that he could not refrain from tears in relating them to me. Obedience obliged him to make this manifestation, for in no other case would he speak, and even then, he would only reply to my questions; keeping to himself through humility many things which might have given me a higher opinion of him. Having asked him if he did not meditate on other subjects besides the Passion, he answered: "What do you wish me to meditate on, Father?

In the Passion I find everything. Is it not true that it includes all things?" With regard to himself, besides religious observance, which rendered his life similar to that of others, he concealed in his mind a profound contempt for himself, which made him very obliging and charitable to all. He was also most attentive in mortifying the smallest wish, that seemed to him not entirely according to the divine will. He had learned by experience that any negligence in this respect, brought upon him a subtraction of the presence of God and of His accustomed favours, and he would not have exchanged one of His graces, for all the goods of the world. This it was that animated him to serve his good Master well, and supported him in his labours and combats.

Towards others, it was difficult to know which most to admire, his patience in supporting their shortcomings in his regard, his extreme attention to avoid whatever could give them the slightest pain, or his eagerness in serving and obliging them. Human respect had no influence over him, and he could have said with St. Paul: "I think it a little thing to be judged by men." Far from apprehending criticism or raillery, he desired nothing more than to be contemptible, and he was full of joy when poor and worn clothes were given him. "Of what consequence to me," he would say, "is the esteem of men? What good can it do me? By forgetting me, they will do me a service, and they would perhaps injure me by taking notice of me. I prefer that which will

assist my progress, to that which might hinder it."

As for his superiors, it was impossible to see without edification the veneration he testified for them. It proceeded from his lively faith, which caused him to behold in them the depositaries of divine authority. He would not, for all the world, have transgressed the least of their commands, or refused any of their injunctions, however difficult. Instead of murmuring at their reproofs, he said to himself interiorly: "The more they mortify me, the more I will love them; should I not be ungrateful if I were not thankful for their anxiety to make me perfect, when they are not bound to do me this service? The less I deserve their reproofs, the more grateful I will be for their charity."

When he was making known to me his sentiments on this subject, in the manifestation of conscience he had to make, he related to me under a strict obligation of secrecy, the following circumstance. One of his superiors, to whom he had been falsely accused, severely reproved him and would not listen to any justification; saying that the fact did not admit of doubt. Though his reputation was deeply wounded, the brother was not angry; and through consideration for his superior he never mentioned this occurrence to any one. He could not indeed avoid seeing the mistake he made, by rejecting his reasons and refusing to hear him; but he attributed this denial of justice to the zeal which animated him,

and turned this trial to his perfection in obedience. When I asked him what facility he had in his communications with God, he replied: "Before I had entirely given myself up to obedience, I was always uneasy, and consequently little united to God: but since I made to Him the sacrifice of my will without reserve, all has gone on well, Father; I have no longer either fears or desires; I live in peace, my heart is at ease, prayer is my life; but I willingly sacrifice it when it is required of me, and this is not seldom. I drive my cart with a heart as joyous as if I were on my roof in contemplation. Besides I can do something towards prayer in performing this service."

As for seculars, he might be said to thirst after their salvation. He would have wished to make God known to all who did not know Him, and to make them resolve to keep His holy law. He never missed any opportunity of helping them by his advice; often in meeting with country people, whose ignorance he pitied, he began by speaking of their fields, then by degrees he led the conversation to the salvation of their souls; and he so well knew how to adapt his words to their necessities, that they entered into their hearts like water in a dry soil; he often succeeded in converting them, or effecting some change in their lives. When I questioned him regarding his method of carrying on this apostolate, he replied: "I reprove sinners when I think the correction likely to be useful. I teach the good to regulate their lives in a more Christian manner.

I have to reproach myself, Father, with not having ventured up to this time to speak openly of God to all, but only to some few, and with caution. This is great cowardice, is it not? I am therefore firmly determined to give up all these precautions, and labour for the salvation of those I meet with great confidence." As he said this, his heart was so touched that he shed tears. We have every reason to believe that his reserve on this point was dictated by his extreme prudence, for he felt a wish to speak of God that he could not contain. This I have learned from the brothers who often accompanied him in his journeys to the country house.

My first thought, when listening to the communication he made me of his zeal, was to induce him to moderate it; but when I heard from trustworthy witnesses the happy result of his words, I did not think it right to oppose him. Though without education, he was very enlightened; and you know as well as I, that towards the end of his life God gave him the gift of Prophecy. Now that I have given you at your request, all that I could gather of his life from my conversations with him, I conclude by begging you to give me in writing those details that I do not know; and to send also the verses which he made on the Passion of Jesus Christ. Let us beg of God that our end may be like his. Amen.

CHAPTER XLV.

CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

I am able to add to Father Balthasar's account some few circumstances regarding the holy life of this good brother. By prolonging this digression, I wander from my subject, it is true; but in these works the style of writing is of less consequence than the edification of readers. From the beginning of his religious life, he generously applied himself to the mortification of nature, overcoming all his repugnances, and resisting his desires and his inclinations. When he returned from the fields after laborious work, and often bearing a heavy burden, he occasionally held with himself the following colloquy:

"Where art thou going, Ximenez?"

"I am going back to the college to take a little rest."

"Thou art tired, then?"

"I am entirely exhausted."

"But if, on thy return, superiors should tell thee to do such or such a thing; what answer wouldst thou make?"

"They will not tell me that; for I am tired, and they will see it plainly."

"But at any rate, the thing is not impossible, and I suppose that it will happen; wilt thou obey?"

"Shall I obey?—there is no doubt of that; I should even be glad that they should put me to this trial."

In fact, it was not uncommon to order him some duty on these occasions; God so ordaining it, to satisfy his pious desires. He then obeyed with joy; especially when he was required to clean the stables, or other places more disgusting: for he loved these labours, where mortification and humility each had a share. Not content with the labours of the week, he used to ask on Sundays and holidays, to help the cook in his duties, so that he put off his rest until the future life. On one festival day, the Father Rector had forbidden him to eat, in punishment for some failing. The Father Minister finding it necessary to send him to the country house, Ximenez set off. When he returned towards evening, half dead with hunger, he went to the church; and there, prostrate before the Blessed Sacrament, he made a vow to obey the prohibition he thought he had received, until his superior should of his own accord revoke it. He remained in his room, therefore, when the bell rang for supper; but Providence watched over His faithful servant. The Father Rector, not having been able to go to the refectory until the end of the second table, asked if all had been at supper? "Yes, Father," answered the refectorian, "Brother Ximenez is the only one that has not appeared, and I believe your reverence sent him to the country house." "He must be returned," answered the Rector, "go and look

in his room; and if he be there, send him." He came, and when the Father asked him why he had not been to supper with the others, he replied: "Because your reverence forbade me to eat." "You are mistaken, brother," replied the Rector, "I merely forbade you to take your breakfast; and you should have taken some provisions when you were sent into the country. Go quickly and repair the injury you have imprudently done to yourself." I need not say that the Rector was greatly touched and edified by such exact obedience.

On another occasion, having come from the country house for certain things required by the workmen, he went to ask Father Minister for them. This Father, thinking he showed rather too much eagerness, pretended not to hear him. The good brother, who was in a hurry to return, as the workmen were losing time, repeated his petition several times, but to no purpose, the Minister giving him no answer. After waiting an hour, the humble Religious retired in affliction, not at the silence of his superior, but at the boldness which he had been guilty of, in repeating the same thing several times, and in his grief he made a promise to Almighty God that he would avoid in future, what he called an insolent importunity. Having gone again the next day to Father Minister for the same cause, he mentioned his want, and waited patiently for the answer. He waited three hours, which he spent in prayer before a crucifix that was there. The superior, delighted with his heroic patience,

then told him to take what he wanted. After several similar acts, God was pleased to make known to him, what He thought of this truly religious conduct. One day, when he was praying in the church before an image of Blessed Mary, entreating her with tender affection to help him to walk always in the right path, he heard a voice which said to him: "Continue, Ximenez, to obey blindly: there is no path straighter or shorter, to arrive at religious perfection." These words sank into the depth of his soul, and rendered this virtue dearer to him than ever. What shall I say of his tender love of poverty? It was visible on all occasions; and the labours of his choice were always those that are looked upon as the most vile. He would have the oldest clothes and the worst food. The litter of his mule was his favourite bed, and he often took his rest there. But he valued much more highly, poverty of spirit, without which, exterior poverty is a body without a soul. One of his brothers, remarking the worn appearance of his clothes, congratulated him that he was really poor. "It is not enough to be poorly clothed to merit that beautiful title," answered Ximenez. "What else is required?" answered the other. "Poverty," he said, "requires a peaceful heart in the privation of all things. A Religious badly clothed, badly shod, badly fed, and yet satisfied, is truly one of Jesus Christ's poor. But he that is grieved at being so treated, and wishes for more than he has, is really rich." Some one having asked him to give a definition of poverty, he

answered by the following comparison: "A man has made for himself a beautiful garden, planted with excellent trees, and ornamented with flowers. One day, when he goes to visit it, he finds his trees cut down, and his flowers pulled up, but this devastation does not disturb his peace: we may be sure that he has poverty in his heart. A truly poor man is one who is attached to God alone. Whoever is still attached to any created object, or is afflicted at anything, but that he does not serve God for Himself alone, is not what the Gospel calls poor in spirit." The reader may perhaps ask where this man had learned such sublime philosophy? I answer, in prayer; where the Holy Ghost teaches souls without noise of words, where He discovers to them the highest truths, without any necessity to have recourse to reason. In this school the truly learned are formed, and not by books, or in the schools. This simple man spoke of God in such a manner, as to astonish the most learned. Father Balthasar, during his visitation, went one day to the country house, intending to surprise Father Provincial and the other Fathers who were with him. When they were summoned to the refectory for dinner, he called the good brother and said to him: "You are to give us an exhortation in place of the usual lecture; go into the pulpit." Ximenez obeyed without a word of excuse, and gave an excellent discourse, with so much unction, that his hearers shed tears. I can only give one extract, which was related to me by one of them. "As I came back to-day to the

country house, I met a cart full of barley drawn by two mules, which looked pretty strong: however, the cart got fast in the mud, and they tried in vain to extricate it. I lent a hand, and some persons who were passing came to help, and, thanks to our united efforts, we released it: then I asked the carter how it was that two such strong and good-looking animals had not been able to draw the cart out alone. 'Because,' he said, 'the poor beasts eat little, and are very thin.' 'Do you want for barley then?' I asked. 'No, thank God,' he answered, 'my cart is full; but I do not give them more than a fixed quantity.' Then, said Ximenez, speaking to his hearers, I thought of so many celebrated preachers and learned doctors, who remain stationary in the way of perfection, without being able to advance a step, on account of their leanness and spiritual weakness. It is not that they want food, for they are loaded with it, but instead of nourishing themselves with it in meditation, they offer it to any one who will take it, and thus they continue imperfect, while they lead others to sanctity." He insisted so strongly on his subject, that his hearers, who had begun by laughing at his comparison, ended by being deeply touched by an application so humbling, and yet so just.

The good brother had some special devotions, which were clear signs of his fervour and holiness. When he was working at repairs of the church, each time that he entered, though he might be carrying heavy burdens, he never failed to take holy water and piously make the sign of the cross.

At the first sound of the Angelus, he left his occupations, and knelt down to recite this prayer. Once, when occupied with one of the brothers in pushing an enormous stone along the boards that led to the mason's scaffolding, the Angelus bell was heard. The stone at this moment was not firmly placed, and was in danger of falling, yet Ximenez left hold of it to say this prayer, the other brother did the same, and the stone remained as it was, to their great astonishment, as it appeared quite a miracle.

Sometimes after receiving holy communion at the country house, he went into a field to hide himself, that he might be more at liberty to breathe forth his love in sighs and exclamations. His fervour made him require very few books: during the seventeen years that he lived in religion, he only read two: the Letters of St. Catherine of Sienna, and the Life of Jesus Christ, by Ludolph the Carthusian. He contented himself with reading two or three lines at once, and went away saying: "Let us ruminate this: a sheep that did not ruminate, would never grow fat."

He was very charitable towards the souls in Purgatory, and laboured to help them, offering for them his prayers, his good works, and his communions especially, because he knew that to be the offering most agreeable to God. For a long time, he communicated only on Sundays, with the exception of certain Festivals, when he asked for this precious favour. Before he asked

it, he went to express his desire to Jesus Christ Himself in His Tabernacle. His humility making him still uncertain, he ended by saying: "Let us refer it to Father Rector's judgment. If he do not consent, it will be a sign that God does not wish to grant me this favour. If, on the contrary, he consent, I shall conclude that my Lord wishes to give Himself to me." He offered this action beforehand for the souls in Purgatory, either the better to secure the granting of his request, or through compassion for these suffering souls; this devotion, which he had always had, acquired new strength from the following circumstance. One All Saints' Day, when praying in the college church, before the image of the Immaculate Conception, a scruple came into his mind regarding what he called his indifference for these poor souls: he then heard a voice which said to him: "Ximenez, remember the souls in Purgatory." "I will do so, Lord," he answered quickly. In fact from that time until his death, he gave up to them all the satisfactory part of his devotions, mortifications, and labours.

All his actions were accompanied by spiritual considerations, of which the following is an example. One day when he was working in a vineyard with another Brother, he judged from the rapidity of his movements, that he was acting without interior spirit and without devotion. "Ah Brother!" he said to him, "devotion is wanting." Persuaded that his quickness was better than the slowness of Ximenez, whose

temperament was phlegmatic, he replied smiling: "Where is the devotion of a man that drags himself along rather than walks?" "When I go up hill," answered Ximenez, "I accompany the holy family in their journey to Egypt, and I offer them all my steps and movements; when I go down, I return with them to Nazareth, making the same offering."

During Father Balthasar's visitation, several little events happened that I will not omit. Ximenez was staying at the country house with another Brother, who helped him with his work in the fields. This man, moved by jealousy, went to the Father Visitor and said: "Father, I am come to ask to drive the cart, in place of Ximenez. This good Brother is always in heaven, and most certainly, if he keeps this employment, some misfortune will happen. A young girl has been nearly killed already, through his contemplations." The Father then sent for Ximenez, and questioned him about the accident to the young girl. "It is true," he replied, "the wheel of my cart passed over her body, and I cannot tell how it happened; but thank God, she did not receive any wound." Then the Father sent for the other brother and said to him, "You may henceforward drive the cart as you wish. I know, however, that brother Ximenez performed his duty carefully, and that you have accused him unjustly. Go and ask his pardon, and beg of God not to allow any misfortune to happen to you, in punishment of your fault." Unhappily for him, this was a prophetic

menace that was soon realized. The year following, in going to fetch salt for the college, his mule left the road in spite of all his efforts, and overturned the cart with so much violence, that he was killed on the spot; we may hope and believe that this was merely a temporal punishment, for this brother was in other respects a good Religious, and had received the day before the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist.

Father Balthasar, at the end of his visit, made it evident that he had received the gift of prophecy by saying to the Fathers, that Ximenez would not be long in this world. In effect, this brother, who was that very day at the country house, came home at night with a violent fever upon him, and took to his bed, to leave it no more during life. Foreseeing clearly that he had not long to live, he endeavoured to make the most holy use possible of the time that remained: his patience was unalterable, his recollection so profound, that he seemed to be occupied with God alone: his silence continual, excepting when he had to reply to some question. Father Provincial having asked him if he then desired to go to heaven, and if he asked this grace of God, he answered: "Father, I wish to become good and to serve God as I ought; and for the rest, I abandon myself to Divine Providence, firmly convinced that my God, who is infinitely good, will reward me as I deserve. I should like to ask for heaven, but I dare not do so, because I fear that

would be self-love." When the infirmarian was offering him a drink, a brother who was present seeing that he did not look at him, said, "Why do you not speak to me, my dear brother? Why are you not cheerful as usual?" "My soul is wearied," answered Ximenez, "and in eight days I shall die." It was Tuesday when he said this, and on the following Tuesday his prediction was accomplished. On the Friday, the same brother, who was passing the night near him, perceived that he did not move about as usual; wishing to know what it meant, he asked him if he felt any change. "I do not feel anything extraordinary," he answered, "but I think I am a happy man, for my heart abounds in consolation." On the Sunday he seemed to be at the point of death, and those who were present thought he was going to breathe his last. "Is it not time," said a Father to him, "to read for you the prayers for the agonizing?" "There is no hurry, Father," the sick man replied, "I will give you notice when the time arrives." "But," said the Father, "are you certain of being conscious?" "Yes," he said, "I shall be so to the end." On the Monday night, when this same Father was at his bedside, he told him that the time was come for the recommendation of his soul. He sent at once for several other Fathers, recited the prayers of the agonizing, and a few minutes after, Ximenez died so peacefully, that no one perceived the moment of his departure. I will mention later his apparition to Father Balthasar.

CHAPTER XLVI.

FATHER BALTHASAR IS APPOINTED PROVINCIAL OF PERU.—A WONDERFUL CIRCUMSTANCE THAT HAPPENED TO HIM ON HIS RETURN FROM ARRAGON TO VILLA GARCIA.

The island of Majorca being included in the province of his visitation, he embarked for it, but even before the vessel sailed, he was so ill with sea-sickness, that he was obliged to go on land. There a new trial awaited him, for he at once received a letter naming him Provincial of Peru. He owed this appointment to Father Pinnius, procurator for that province. He had asked the Father General for him, as the man best calculated to animate and keep up the zeal of the apostolic labourers employed in that great work. The pious visitor received this mission with great calmness, and accepted it with perfect submission to the will of God; a submission the more admirable, as he had just experienced the sufferings caused him by the sea, and he was also subject to another serious infirmity. In giving his answer to Father Pinnius he never complained, as he might have done, that he had engaged him in so important and perilous an affair, without consulting him. He simply said to him, that if such were the will of God, he was ready to accomplish it; I give the letter, which is too edifying to be omitted:—

"Is it really the will of God that calls me to Peru? The event will prove it, for I have no wish to oppose its execution; I have not to reproach myself with having solicited this appointment, since the proposal was made, not to me, but to my chief. This would be enough to make me respect the command I have received; for this method of acting is conformable to the ways of Providence. When God wished to withdraw His people from Egypt, and lead them into the land of promise, He gave His orders, not to them, but to Moses. I might, it is true, object that my health is bad, and that I suffer greatly from the sea, but I leave it to your Reverence to do this, if you judge proper. This is all that obedience allows in such cases. If you think it well to submit these observations to Father General, and he persists, I shall have nothing more to do but to set off, expecting the necessary strength from the Divine Goodness. I beg Him to increase yours both corporally and spiritually, and may He be your light and your life. Amen."

From that time he held himself in readiness to depart, to the great regret of all who profited by his advice and his guidance. The Duchess of Gandia being come to express her deep sorrow, he thought it proper, for her consolation, to make known to her some of his sentiments. "For many years," he said, "I have been completely silent on everything concerning myself; I prolong my prayers on these occasions, leaving to my

superiors the care of disposing of me, according to God's good pleasure."

While he thus forgot his own interests, others looked after them, and especially the foundress of the college where he was Rector. She so earnestly entreated Father General to leave her this good Father for her consolation, and the good of the country, that he could not refuse her this favour. In consequence, he sent word to the Father that his appointment was revoked.

I will here call the attention of my readers, to the advantages of abandoning ourselves to the dispensations of Providence. If Father Balthasar had lost sight, on this occasion, of his principles of obedience, it would have been for the sake of preserving his life. Well! he died that very same year; then others would not have failed to say, and he would himself perhaps have believed, that God thus punished his resistance to His will: for it is often in the designs of Providence to punish man by that in which he has sinned. His submission, on the contrary, gained him the merit of the work without its labour, and he died, not only without remorse, but with a peaceful soul and a heart full of consolation.

On his return from this celebrated visitation, in which he had gained all hearts, the Provincial went with him as far as Agreda, and could not part from him without shedding many tears. Thence he went to Cervera, his native place, where he spent a few days: he then set off for Burgos, having with him his companion and one of his

brothers, Gaspard Alvarez, who was followed by a servant on foot. For several days a heavy and cold rain had been falling, which had made the roads bad, and inundated the plains, so that they were like marshes. The bad weather continued during the following days, but the last day was terrible. The rain fell in torrents, and so filled the roads, that the travellers were obliged to proceed very slowly and cautiously. About mid-day, they came to a wretched inn, filled with men of a low class, who were playing and swearing horribly. The holy man, deeply afflicted, begged them for the love of God to cease blaspheming; but these unfortunate men seemed to take pleasure in multiplying their oaths and curses. Indignant at these horrible offences against the Divine Majesty, offered without any cause, the Father got up trembling, and said to his companions: "Let us leave this place." He went out, fetched his mule himself from the stable, and mounting it pursued his journey, which obliged the others to imitate him. They travelled on for several miles without meeting with any town or village, or even any man who could direct them in the way to Burgos. The Father was about a stone's throw in front of his companions, that he might be at liberty to entertain himself with God, for prayer was so necessary to him, that no weather could be an obstacle to it. The sun had already gone down, and the night had begun to appear, when he reached a flat part of the country, so completely submerged by water, that it was like a pond. No longer able to distinguish

the road, he waited for his companions to consult them; but they knew no more than himself which was the right way. "Well!" said the holy man, "let us recommend ourselves to God, and hope for His help." All began to pray fervently, and then they all cried out together, to call some one to their assistance, but no voice answered them.

Some minutes later, however, they were joined by a man on a white horse, who asked them whither they were going? The Father having answered, "To Burgos," the stranger replied, "I am going there also, and if you please we will travel in company: follow me: I know the road, and can point it out to you without fear of mistake." He then went on in front, and our travellers followed him. After proceeding about a hundred paces, they met with a horse that had fallen under its load, and near it was a boy, crying. The horseman raised it from the ground without dismounting, and went on. The Father's companions were not, however, quite free from uneasiness: terrified at the depth of the water, they said to one another, "Are we really in the right road? or may we not be deceived in trusting to this stranger?" But immediately their courage revived, and their fears vanished. As soon as they had got over this terrible road, the horseman joined Father Balthasar, and they held together, at a little distance, a conversation that seemed very agreeable. The holy man's brother seeing them go so fast that his servant could not keep up, called to him to slacken his pace, through compassion for this poor man

who was on foot, and thoroughly tired. Scarcely had he done speaking, than he saw the horseman close to him; without dismounting, he gave his hand to the servant, and placed him behind him as easily as if he had been a feather, and then by one movement, rejoined Father Balthasar. At ten o'clock at night they entered Burgos: the Father then offered his thanks to his guide, not wishing to detain him. "No, no," he answered, "I will go with you as far as the college gate, and not till then will I take leave of you." He travelled with them to the end, set down the servant, told him to ring, and disappeared, not by riding away, but by vanishing from their astonished eyes. Gaspard Alvarez and his servant, convinced that it was an angel, told the fact to all who would listen. Father Balthasar kept his opinion on the subject to himself; but his companion, Father Novarro, said in confidence to the Religious of the college, that it was Brother Ximenez, whose death had just taken place. It appears that when he was near him for a moment, he had heard him say to Father Balthasar: "Because you honoured me when I was on earth, God has permitted me to deliver you from this danger."

After two or three days spent at Burgos, the Father set out for Villa Garcia, happy to return to his beloved solitude, and desiring nothing, but to remain hidden there for the rest of his life; but Divine Providence had other designs upon him, as we shall see hereafter.

CHAPTER XLVII.

ZEAL OF FATHER BALTHASAR FOR HIS RELIGIOUS OF THE THIRD PROBATION.

No sooner had he returned to the college, than he resumed, with his accustomed fervour, his beloved office of master of novices, and of the scholastics who were going to make their third probation, according to the constitutions of the Society. I was happy enough to be of the number, and this year was for me so full of sanctification, thanks to the care of this able director, that I cannot sufficiently thank our Lord for it. I have already spoken often and at length of his zeal and skill in guiding souls. But I wish to return once more to the praises of my benefactor, and to give to them, as it were, the finishing stroke. Besides, his ministry towards us was not the same as that which he exercised towards the novices. This will, therefore, make this account a little different from what I have said before. Father Alvarez, who was rather severe with the young novices who required to be tried and humbled, treated, on the contrary, those of the third probation with great kindness, contenting himself with opening to them the door of mortification, that they might enter of their own accord. They did so in effect, animated by the example of the others, and the fervent exhor-

tations of their venerable master, who never failed to remind them, when opportunity offered, that instead of following the novices, it belonged to them to precede them. He had soon reason to be satisfied with their zeal, for, not content with the practices of humility they could perform at home, they asked him as a special favour to allow them to go and beg alms during a fair, held in a very populous town near at hand, to have the opportunity of more completely overcoming themselves, and trampling underfoot worldly honour.

The one who most excelled in this kind of mortification was Father Francis of Cardona, who had already given such a bright example during his noviciate at Métine. I will only relate his last act, which is the more memorable as it was the cause of his death. Having heard that the brother in charge of the farm-yard was going to a fair to buy some little pigs, he offered to accompany him, pretending, as usual, that he was very clever in these matters. The Father Rector did not believe it; but understanding what he wanted, he allowed him to go. They, therefore, bought several of these animals, and set off to return to the college. After travelling some distance, Father Francis, perceiving that one of the little pigs could not walk any further, took it up by the feet and put it on his shoulders, in the position given to the sheep carried by the Good Shepherd. What mortification! It is related that the monks of Mount Cassino, seeing Carloman, the brother of Charlemagne, carrying a lamb one day thus, were full of

admiration, who then could fail to admire the son of the Duke of Cardona carrying on his back an unclean animal? When they reached home, they found themselves in a difficulty which the brother ought to have foreseen, but had not: there was no place ready for these animals. Father Francis at once taking stones and mortar, built them a temporary place; but this fatigue, with that of the journey, had such an effect upon him, that he was seized with a burning fever that carried him off in eleven days.

The wise Rector took great pains to render these young Fathers truly spiritual, by attaching them more and more to prayer, and making them advance in familiarity, with Almighty God. When he discovered in any one of them a special attraction, or greater aptitude for the interior life, he devoted particular attention to him, and took pleasure in holding long conversations with him. The most favoured, at the time we are speaking of, was Christopher Gonzalve, on whom God had conferred a great gift of prayer, with many other eminent qualities. He was a most zealous man; very prudent and learned. The Father, delighted to find him so highly gifted, profited by it to make him an able master of novices. He became so in effect; but he lived too short a time to do all the good that was expected from him. Having had the happiness of being long with him, and admitted to his intimacy, I one day asked him how he had obtained so extraordinary a gift of prayer. "It did not cost me much," he replied;

"I had only to resolve strongly, and to execute with constancy the desire God inspired me with, of mortifying vain-glory in myself in literary matters." I will give this anecdote at length. He had begun his philosophical studies with abilities far above the common, which gained him marked superiority over his companions. This excellence being an occasion of vanity, he had to suffer continually from the temptations it caused; terrified by the danger to which they exposed him, and wishing to avoid it at any price, he took the generous resolution, without neglecting his duties, of acting in such a manner, as to remove the idea entertained by others of his capacity. With this object, he often asked others what he knew better than they, and asked for an explanation of what he perfectly comprehended. In discussions he gave his opinion, and appeared embarrassed in supporting it. When others were arguing with him in class, he answered the first objection timidly, and at the second remained silent. The professor, in consequence, gave to others the most difficult and most honourable thesis, and to him what was easiest; but instead of being grieved he rejoiced in his heart. By this stratagem of humility, which was unsuspected by his professor and his companions, he lost the reputation of superior ability; but in recompense, he obtained the divine familiarity, and the inestimable gift of high contemplation. Let not my readers be surprised, that so humble a man would acknowledge such things; these manifestations are of

great use to those who wish to advance in virtue, when they are dictated by true zeal. The experience of the one is an instruction for the other, and an encouragement to imitate his example. This confidence of his was very useful to me; for I then began to see my error, to believe that it is not so difficult as I thought it, to love contempt and disgrace, and that this is the surest road to attain high perfection.

But in exhorting us strongly to prayer, Father Balthasar was far from allowing us to go to any extreme. "Be careful," he used to say in his exhortations, "not to become so attached to the sweets of prayer, as to neglect the ministry of the salvation of souls. It is for this that God has made you apostolic men; you cannot fail in this duty, without becoming unfaithful to your vocation. If you sometimes experience an inclination for prayer that is injurious to your zeal, be assured that this attraction is not from the Spirit of God, Who cannot be contrary to Himself. It will perhaps come into your mind that you are safer with God than with men; but be certain that this is an illusion. It is not solitude that gives security, but the divine protection. Now God may abandon you in your room, if you remain there through your own will, and protect you in public places when obedience guides you. Behold our Divine Lord in the garden of Olives; He interrupts His prayer three times to assist His disciples, and shall we fear to do as much for the wants of our neighbour? But these souls, you will say, have

pastors, whose duty it is to take care of them. I answer that the good Samaritan might have said the same; but he took care of this wounded man, whom the Priests and Levites had neglected. We must then take advantage of the opportunities of doing good that God seems to place before us, without examining whether others should have done it in our place. Supposing you found a diamond on a public road, would you leave it because a traveller had passed by without taking it? Now a soul is worth more than a diamond. I know that by giving ourselves too much to the service of others, injury may ensue; but there is a medium in all things, and in this medium virtue is found. What advantage would it be to you to gain the whole world, if your soul were the sacrifice? Happily there is a means of uniting the two, and this is understood by well directed zeal." To accustom us to so necessary a union, he used to send us to labour in our Lord's vineyard, carefully observing that each of us did it without injury to our interior life. He employed those who had the gift of preaching, in this duty in our church, he sent others, less advanced, into the villages on Sundays and festivals, to catechise children, and made those hear confessions whom he judged capable of this ministry. Finally, he sent the most able to give short missions, and pointed out to the superiors those who succeeded, that they might be employed in this important work. Of this number was Father Christopher Vella, who had been given to him as minister.

After trying him and humbling him like a novice, he induced the Provincial to employ him as a missionary. He gave great satisfaction; for he was powerful in word, and truly indefatigable. He traversed the mountains of Leon and Astorga, chasing away vices, and bringing back all hearts to Jesus Christ. After several years of incredible labour, he came back to die at Villa Garcia. I was then in the College, and God granted me the grace to afford some help to this good Religious. He had always had a timorous, or rather scrupulous conscience; so that he sometimes required an order from his superior before he would go to the Altar. But when he saw death near at hand, the judgment of God gave him so much terror that he anxiously entreated Him to grant him a few more years to do penance. Witnessing his fears, I consoled him with all my power, well knowing that his holy life rendered him very dear to God. I endeavoured particularly to remove from him this desire of life, the consequences of which I feared, seeing that the sick man was rapidly drawing near the grave. "Believe me, my dear Father," I said to him, "a year of penance is not what you require, for since you became a Religious, you have done nothing else; besides, it is plain that God does not intend to grant it to you. Why then weary yourself with useless desires? It is better to adore the designs of God over you, and conform yourself lovingly to His holy will." It pleased our Lord in the end, to reward his long and faithful service by the return of peace; the fears that

had agitated him were succeeded by a sweet confidence, which he manifested continually, saying, "Thanks be to God who has given us the victory through Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. xv. 57.) "Gratias Deo qui dedit nobis victoriam per Jesum Christum." He died six days after, full of peace and joy.

To recapitulate what I have said in this chapter, I will repeat, that Father Balthasar recommended three things particularly to his disciples; prayer, humility, and zeal for the salvation of their neighbour. These are in fact the three qualities that properly belong to evangelical labourers; let us then ask them of God, for His greater glory, the salvation of souls, and our own sanctification.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

FATHER BALTHASAR IS APPOINTED PROVINCIAL OF TOLEDO; HE PREPARES HIMSELF FOR THIS CHARGE BY A RETREAT, IN WHICH GOD GIVES HIM GREAT LIGHTS REGARDING THE POVERTY, THE ABJECTION, AND THE SUFFERINGS OF OUR SAVIOUR.

When the Father General was made aware of the results of the holy man's visitation, he appointed him Provincial of Toledo, with the intention that all the provinces of Spain should profit by his lights, and his edifying example. The letter which he wrote on this subject, to the houses which were to be subject to his authority, proved

to them his high opinion of the Father's qualifications. "In giving him to you for Provincial," he said to them, "I give you the best I possess." The pious Rector, having received this commission at the beginning of Lent, desired to prepare himself for it by performing the spiritual exercises, as if he had foreseen that this would be his last Lent, and this office the last of his works. In consequence, he shut himself up in solitude for thirty days, and applied himself to prayer with greater fervour than ever. His particular object was to imprint more deeply in his heart the living image of Jesus Christ; and for this end, he occupied himself almost exclusively in considering His three inseparable companions, poverty, suffering, and pain. His tender compassion for our Blessed Saviour gained for him very strong lights, which furnished him with matter for many touching exhortations. I will attempt to give a short analysis of them.

He took for his text these words of the Prophet: "I am poor, and in my labours from my youth; having been exalted, I am humbled and troubled." "Pauper sum ego, et in laboribus a juventute meâ; exaltatus autem, humiliatus sum et conturbatus." (Ps. lxxxvii. 16.) He then showed us, that these words point out the path followed by our Divine Master, during His whole life; for He was poor, suffering, and humbled from His birth, and these companions of His choice grew up with Him, and never left Him until after death. Then, entering into details, he explained three degrees of His

heroic poverty, always united with humiliations and sufferings; the first great, the second greater, and the third perfect or consummate.

In the first degree, he showed us this generous Friend, renouncing not only the possession of temporal goods, but also the thoughts and affections which generally accompany them, as a shadow follows a moving object. Thus, he said, He possessed in this world, neither house, land, money, or furniture; not through necessity, but by choice. He was content with the simple use of what was necessary, and this use was most moderate, and only extended to what was required for the preservation of life; for He desired to suffer hunger, thirst, cold and heat, and to experience all the miseries of life. And in whatever He used, He always preferred what was commonest and least convenient.

In the second degree, he showed Him to us entirely dead to natural affection, and to the wish for anything that could have procured Him honour. Thus He would be born of a poor mother, and brought up in the house of a carpenter. Instead of seeking after princes and magistrates, He loved to mix with poor publicans, and to converse with sinners; and He chose His friends and apostles from amongst fishermen, rough and ignorant men. In Him, no attachment could interfere with the liberty of His heart; even the love He bore His holy Mother was never any obstacle to what He knew to be pleasing to God, and more in accordance with His holy will: a great lesson, by which

He wished to teach us, to keep our hearts disengaged from creatures, and to serve our Creator with perfect liberty of mind.

In the third degree, he made us contemplate our Divine Saviour depriving Himself, as far as He could, of His sovereignty, His power, His sanctity, His Wisdom, and His liberty; though He foresaw that this deprivation would bring upon Him the deepest humiliation, and the most dreadful pain. Was it not, in fact, depriving Himself of His power, to submit Himself as He did to the malice of men, and to all the miseries that belong to poor humanity? He subjected Himself to the weakness of childhood, the fatigue of labourers and travellers; He bore hunger and thirst, the inclemency of the seasons, want of sleep, and other bodily necessities; He gave power to the thorns to pierce His head, to the whips to tear His flesh, to the fetters, nails, gall, and vinegar, to make Him suffer horrible torment, and to the lance to pierce His heart; He allowed the Jews to heap calumnies and blasphemies upon Him, the judges to condemn Him, the soldiers to insult Him, the executioners to take His life. Was it not to deprive Himself of His wisdom, to hide from view His knowledge and His talents, and to converse with as much simplicity, as if He were incapable of anything more?

He renounced sanctity, so to speak, by walking in the path of justice in such a manner, that many looked upon Him as a wicked man, a friend of sinners, deceitful, a blasphemer, seditious, worse

than Barabbas, and worthy of death. O! what confusion should not this cause our pride and hypocrisy! He deprived Himself of the sovereignty which belonged to Him, as sovereign Master of Heaven and earth. He was sought after to be made king, and He escaped by flight; emperors are His subjects, yet He submits to their laws, and pays the tribute they presume to ask for. Judges have no authority over Him, for kings have no judges; yet He obeys them, He answers their questions, and submits to their judgment, though so unjust. Before this, we have seen Him obeying His Mother and St. Joseph for thirty years; we have seen Him living in the midst of His Apostles, not like a master, but a servant, even so far as to wait on them at table, and wash their feet. O! after such an example, who would wish to shake off the yoke of obedience and seek after dignities? But I will say no more, for I cannot here do justice to the great lessons contained in this poverty of our Divine Master.

Such were the considerations that occupied Father Balthasar during these exercises; for, most certainly, in speaking to us, he only poured forth the abundance of his heart. I heard him speak, in private, several times on the same subject; and he spoke in so moving a manner, that I was quite out of myself, and felt the strongest desire to share his feelings. I cannot help confessing here that I had great need of hearing such things; for when I meditated on the poverty, sufferings, and insults of our Saviour, it seemed to me

impossible to love such treatment; but his exhortations began to convince me to the contrary, and God in His goodness, soon completely changed my ideas in this regard. One day, when I was in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, a light crossed my mind with the rapidity of lightning, and yet this short illumination was enough to convince me, that I might as sincerely desire humiliations as worldlings desire honours. I felt myself even moved to seek them, with the hope of obtaining them. "Be not surprised," he once said to us, "if I insist very strongly on this subject. It seems to me impossible to make it of too much importance; for the love of what is called honour would be as prejudicial to your perfection and the success of your ministry, as profound humility would be useful in promoting it."

CHAPTER XLIX.

FATHER BALTHASAR ATTAINS PERFECT LOVE.

"Blessed is the man whose help is from Thee: he has disposed ascensions in his heart, from this valley of tears to the place destined for him." "Beatus vir cujus est auxilium abs te; ascensiones in corde suo disposuit, in valle lacrymarum, in loco quem posuit." (Ps. lxxxiii. 6.) These words, which are applicable to all the saints, are no less

so to our venerable Father. Like them, God shielded him with His protection, enriched him with His graces, and heaped upon him the blessings of His sweetness; and he, like a faithful servant, knew how to derive fruit from these precious gifts. He was seen to advance without interruption from one degree to another, from virtue to virtue, until he reached the highest contemplation, and united himself to God by the most perfect love. In order to support this truth, which is proved by the whole tenor of his life, we will mention the lights and graces granted him by God, to assist him in this noble enterprise. In the first place, He made him feel and experience strongly, that the spiritual exercises are like a furnace in which hearts are melted, should they be even hard as stones. Hence his great fidelity and fervour in performing them.

He then gave him to understand, that this divine fire is kept up by His benefits, which made him value them exceedingly: in consequence, he received those common to all as if they had been granted to him alone: but how much more did he esteem particular graces! He kept up a lively remembrance of them in his heart, that he might pay his Benefactor a just tribute of obedience and love. That did not satisfy his gratitude. To secure himself against the infidelity of his memory, he had made in his journal a list of the blessings he had received from the Divine Goodness, under this title: "Mercies of God in my regard." I cannot copy it at length; I will only say that he had put

first the knowledge of his misery; the grace of perfectly opening his heart; the desires of humiliation, abjection and mortification, that he felt in his heart; and his firm will to refuse nothing to his good Master. This was the fuel which enkindled daily more and more the fire of his love, for nothing engages the heart of another so much, as to show great love for him. God made known to him by a strong light, the greatness and method of His love for us, a most precious knowledge, which he noted in these terms: "To say that God loves His creature, is to say that He wills and desires his good. Now, in God there is no difference between willing and doing, according to the Psalmist: 'Quæcumque voluit fecit,' 'All that He willed He has done.' His love is a continual flow of mercies, and shower of benefits. Thus, when a soul really loves God, her heart boils, as it were, with the desire of procuring His glory, and as every sincere desire is an act before God, this soul procures Him glory continually. O! how easy is it then to glorify God, and gain riches for heaven, since only desires are required for it! A poor man can have, without giving anything, the merit of alms: a secular may have the glory of apostleship without preaching, and a pious woman obtain the fruits of Holy Communion nearly to the full, without approaching the holy table. O the power of love! O the goodness of our God! One day, during my thanksgiving after Mass, I had this light on the method of my love: that, as God gives me without exception all I

possess, and desires to give me Himself, I ought in my turn to give Him my consolations, my friends and myself, with all the rest: my heart was deeply touched by this just and reasonable thought, and made this universal sacrifice with delight." On another occasion, feeling in prayer an extraordinary hunger after love, I said to our Lord: "How I wish, O my God! that I could henceforward converse with Thee alone, or at least, occupy myself only with the good of souls, who are so dear to Thee! O! that I could begin to-day, the work Thou hadst finished when Thou didst leave the world to ascend to Heaven! O! why cannot I unite myself to Thee so closely, that no occupation can make me lose the remembrance of Thee? Why cannot I lose the power of doing any other thing than what Thy holy will requires? At the same moment, I felt the hope that this grace would be granted me." He received it in effect, for his detachment became so perfect, that divine love, far from meeting with any hostile affection in his heart, found nothing even foreign to it. Taught by this happy experience, he loved to impart it to others in his exhortations. "Have for God," he would say, "so great an esteem, that all the love your heart contains may seem to you too little, to deserve to be offered to this good Master. If you are well convinced of this, you will unite together all your affections, scattered among creatures, however trifling they may appear to you; for when one is poor, one tries to make profit of everything. You will even find your own

interest in this; for every natural attachment to the creature necessarily diminishes what is due to the Creator, and you will then learn by happy experience the emptiness of these human friendships: for your heart will taste a peace more perfect than it has ever before felt. But besides your affections, which are not worthy of being offered to so loving a God, time also is too short to love Him sufficiently. Do not then lose the smallest part of it in anything foreign to this exercise. 'Time,' says St. Augustin, 'having been given to you solely for this purpose, it is lost when it is spent in anything else.' What I say of love, I say also of your thoughts, looks, words and works: all should be directed to your last end." God permitted him to be, one day, tempted to complain interiorly of the ingratitude of another person towards him, that He might instruct him better on this subject. He thus spoke to him: "When creatures cast you off, they cannot do you a greater service, for three reasons:—1st. They are incapable of satisfying the desires of your heart, which is made for Me and not for them: believe the word of My servant Augustin. For a long time he knocked at their door in search of happiness, but in vain, for he asked of them what they could not give. He should have believed them, for as he himself says, each one answered him: 'Thou deceivest thyself: how can I satisfy thee when I am not thy God?' Nevertheless he was only undeceived by the lessons of experience. After forcing them to give him what they could,

without being able to appease his hunger, he acknowledged his error, and returning to Me, he said to Me these words: 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts cannot rest until they repose in Thee.' 2nd. You would not have obtained, by asking, the little they can give, for they are not naturally very liberal, and they easily take back what they have given, which gives reason to their favourites to be always in fear of their inconstancy and caprice. 3rd. As soon as they fancied they could derive more benefit or pleasure from a rival, they would have left you to run after him, to your great displeasure. Alas! how many men daily experience these reverses of fortune, without being cured of their folly by this sad experience! Hence it comes that they have no desire of the love of God, and the love of creatures cannot satisfy the hunger which devours them. There is, however, a safeguard against these deceits: it is by renouncing their favours before they withdraw them. Is it not folly to lose time with them, when, by leaving them for God, we are sure to find in Him satisfaction, repose, peace, and happiness, in permanent stability? Is there any peace comparable to that of a man who desires nothing? Is there a man so rich, as he who looks upon the goods of this world as superfluous? Such is the position of a Christian to whom God suffices; be then content with Him alone, and His possession will make you despise all else, because you will feel that nothing is wanting to you." Thus strongly enlightened, Father Balthasar had

attained so high a degree of detachment, that no affection could disturb his holy intercourse with God: he did not reach this point, without doing great violence to himself, but his victory was so complete, that it was evident to the witnesses of his life that he was attached to no one whatsoever; and his whole desire was to be able to spend his life in the most complete isolation; but he did not require that, for he could not have exercised greater detachment in the deserts of Africa. It is now easy to understand, how he arrived at the high perfection we are going to speak of in the following chapter.

CHAPTER L.

HIS PERFECT CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD IN DISAGREEABLE OR FORTUNATE EVENTS—SOME OF HIS SENTIMENTS ON THIS SUBJECT.

The life of this holy man, as we have seen, was a great vicissitude of prosperity and adversity of all kinds; but they were all to him as so many steps for reaching the highest point of divine love, so that in him these words of the apostle were verified: "All things co-operate to the good of those who love God." "Diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum." (Rom. viii. 28.) Is there any greater good than the increase of divine love? Now, this is precisely what the friends of God gain from all events, of what kind

soever, and if they continue to turn them to a holy use, the day will arrive when their love will become perfect. If you ask me by what marks this perfection may be known? I answer, that a man has reached the highest point he can attain in this life, when his will is so completely conformed to the Divine Will, that it no longer finds in him any opposition or resistance. Thus, a perfect man wills nothing that God does not will, and wills whatever pleases Him in great or little things, spiritual or corporal. He desires nothing but what may be pleasing to God; he fears nothing, because he knows that nothing happens without the order and permission of Divine Providence; all events are the same to him, because he finds in all the good pleasure of God; he undertakes nothing without consulting Him, or before he knows what will please Him; his disposition is indifference. Let us allow Father Balthasar to speak for himself. "One day," he says, "when I was begging of God to make known to me His will regarding something I desired for His glory, He made me understand the usefulness of this prayer by an interior answer. 'Though your design may be very good,' He said to me, 'you do well to ask My will regarding it, for My glory is not found in this work or the other, but in the accomplishment of My will. Who can know as well as Myself what is calculated to glorify Me? Conformity to My will, is then the best and the most reasonable of all sacrifices. Besides, I shall never be asked in vain to manifest My good pleasure, for My

glory is concerned, and My sole desire is to procure it.' On another occasion, when I wished to know whether I should celebrate the divine mysteries or not, on account of some obstacle that opposed itself, my prayer gained for me the following instruction. 'It is not an indifferent thing to know what God wills or does not will; for not to will what He wills, is unpardonable rebellion, and to will what He wills not, a disobedience worthy of chastisement; if that be true in the least things, how much more when the question is to approach or withdraw from the altar! This action may be either very hurtful or very profitable to you, according as God approves or disapproves of it.' I then perceived more clearly than ever how sad and deplorable is the ignorance in which we live, and how necessary it is to ask light from above, according to the words of Holy Scripture: 'As we know not what we ought to do, our sole resource is to lift our eyes to Thee, O God.' 'Cum ignoramus quid agere debeamus hoc solum habemus residui, ut oculos nostros dirigamus ad te.' (2 Paralip. xx. 12.) He then who has recourse to God in his ignorance, with humility, may count upon receiving light, or may at least hope, if God refuse it, for the pardon of what he could not avoid."

Well convinced of these truths, Father Balthasar was most attentive to conform his will to the will of God, even in spiritual things, being always satisfied with what it pleased God to give him. In the beginning, his slow progress in prayer

caused him some uneasiness, but later, recognizing his error, he said to God: "Since it pleases Thee, O my God, to keep me in the lower way, I wish to be inferior, and to be regarded as such. What would it avail me to be superior to my brethren, in opposition to Thy holy will? I prefer to be below all, and to procure Thy good pleasure in this manner." Complaining one day to God of the multiplicity of business which scarcely left him time for prayer, he heard a voice say to him interiorly: "If I prefer to employ thee with others, rather than converse with thee, of what consequence is it to thee? Shouldst thou not prefer My satisfaction before thine own?" This answer restored joy to his heart. "It may happen," our Lord added, "that many Religious in the Society have not time to do their own will, but they will never want occasions of accomplishing Mine. As the grain of wheat must die before it can bring forth fruit, is it not real folly to complain of the occupations that bring about this blessed death? If I gave you the choice between this and natural death, would you not give the preference to the first, not only as less painful, but as more useful to your interests? Die then to your own will, by doing what I will, and die in silence. You are a Religious; now, do you know what religious orders are? They are positions in which God has placed you, workshops of obedience, infirmaries in which your veins are opened to draw away the blood of your own will, paths of perfection more abounding with riches

than those of Samaria after the defeat of the Assyrians. The rule of government of Religious, is the law of God pure and unspotted. Their meat is to do, in imitation of their model, the will of their Father who is in heaven. Oh, how few know this delicious food! Those alone feed upon it, whose hearts are dead to their own interests. To be worthy of it, you must be able to say with the apostle: 'We try to please God wherever we may be.' 'Contendimus sive absentes, sive præsentes, placere illi,' (1 Cor. v. 9); or with the Royal Prophet, 'Shall not my soul be subject to God?' 'Nonne subjecta erit anima mea Domino?' (Ps. liii.)"

When a soul has reached this degree of conformity, her disinterestedness becomes wonderful. Thus we see that our holy Father had reached the point of loving God without any regard to the recompense, without retaining any wish for the sweetnesses and consolations which He usually bestows on His friends: but let us hear him give his own sentiments on this subject.

"Though acquiescence in Thy will be a duty for all creatures, I consider it impossible that a soul favoured with Thy consolations, should not grieve when she is deprived of them. Is she to be reproached for this as a defect? No, certainly; if this soul is perfect, it is, on the contrary, a rich treasure that God gives her to turn to profit, especially when she has come so far as to feel, that she cannot live without this food of heavenly favours. Nevertheless, we must act, whether it

be agreeable or disagreeable; we must summon up great courage and say to ourselves: 'Is then all lost, because God has withdrawn from me His consolations? No, His guidance remains to me still. Is all lost, because I have no longer particular lights in prayer? No, for I have still the teaching of the Church and the light of faith, which are quite sufficient for my direction. Moreover, they are the only infallible guides, for I may be the dupe of my failings or of my own individual lights; but Divine Faith cannot lead me astray. Ah! I understand now the vicissitudes of heavenly favours; they go and come, that we may not count too much upon them; they appear and disappear like rivers, whose course is sometimes above, and sometimes under the earth, to teach us that faith does not rest upon particular lights, but upon the word of God. Thus, the star, after leading the Magi to Jerusalem disappeared, that they might have recourse to the teaching of the Synagogue, after which it returned, which filled their hearts with consolation. I now understand that these withdrawals of grace are advantageous for our spiritual advancement, and the glory of our Divine Master; for the more the soul is weaned from heavenly sweetnesses, the more she resembles Jesus Christ, Who led a sorrowful, suffering, and desolate life. Wherein then lies the benefit of these spiritual delights? To have a just idea of them, we should compare them to the refreshments taken by a traveller in an inn; they are not given him to induce him to remain, but to enable

him to prosecute his journey with more energy and courage." Here, addressing himself to our Lord, the holy man said: "Since by Thy grace, O my God, I have given myself wholly to Thee, vouchsafe to dispose of me according to Thy good pleasure, this is all I desire, and I will not ask of Thee another faith or other means, greater favours or less suffering; I wish to remain such as Thou has made me, and to be treated as I have deserved. I will be content with the consolations Thou shalt give me, and will not complain of the desolation Thou mayest send me. Accomplish, O Lord, Thy designs upon me with perfect liberty: in that alone, can my soul find the peace to which she aspires." This experience was of great use to him in the direction of beginners, who are usually uneasy because they do not love God with sufficient fervour. He recommended them, 1st, to give this good Master as much love as they could in this state of dryness: 2nd, to bear this cross with patience and sweetness: 3rd, to be content with the graces He gives them, looking on them as very precious, however small they may be: 4th, to be satisfied that He should make them wait for Him, and not to be wearied with His delays, which are very short and very useful for their advancement: 5th, to multiply as much as possible their good works, with the sole view of pleasing Him, and He thus supported this last piece of advice: "Observe the example given you by a chaste and faithful wife. If she dress herself magnificently, it is not to please

men, but her spouse alone, whom she tenderly loves, and whose affection she wishes to preserve. This is so completely her intention, that, to please him, she would be ready to strip off all her ornaments, without heeding the judgment or contempt of others. Of what consequence to her, in fact, is the opinion of those, whose affection is an object of indifference to her? What she wishes is, to appear beautiful in the eyes of her spouse, to make him content and happy; and if she attains this end her heart is satisfied. It is the same with a soul that has a sincere love of God; all her consolation is to please Him. For this she desires the ornaments of virtues, sciences, and spiritual lights, and not to draw upon her the eyes of men, which she would consider a criminal infidelity; or if she seek to fix their attention, it is to make them share in the love that consumes her. Should God withdraw from her His lights and consolations, should He strip her of all things, so as to render her contemptible to all, she will still be peaceful and happy, because all her happiness consists in procuring the good pleasure of that God Whom alone she loves. By acting thus, she is sure to be beloved by Him and to gain eternal riches." To confirm this doctrine, he added that "the chief end of a good prayer and the best fruit to be drawn from it are, to give to God whatever He asks of us, to acquiesce with perfect conformity in all the dispensations of Providence in our regard; consenting that He should deprive us of health, honour, goods, and

temporal conveniences, that He should withdraw His favours, or deprive us of His presence, leaving us in the darkness and ice of winter, that He should allow us to be assailed by temptations, fears, and desolations of all kinds. Nothing is more reasonable: for what is His object in making us walk in these difficult ways, but His own greater glory and our advancement in virtue? a thing perfectly certain, if we be faithful and persevering, if we do not go and ask from creatures the consolations He refuses us, if we do not draw back from the crosses He places before us, and the trials He sends us. If such be our conduct, not only shall we regain His former favours, but we shall obtain much greater. When holy Job lost his children and his flocks, he humbly submitted to the will of Providence, saying: 'The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.' 'Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit: sit nomen Domini benedictum.' (Job i. 21.) Almighty God, satisfied with his resignation, restored to him more than he had lost. Let this be our maxim, whenever God strikes us. Let us also say with the high-priest Heli, when threatened with the loss of his two sons: 'He is the Lord: let Him do what is pleasing in His sight.' 'Dominus est; quod bonum est in oculis ejus faciat.' (1 Kings iii. 18.)"

He who is thus resigned, when he has done what he can and what is his duty, leaves to God the result so entirely, that he is peaceful and con-

tent whatever happens, so that success, on the contrary, is perfectly indifferent to him. "Let us take courage," said Joab to his brother, at the beginning of a war; "let us fight valiantly for our people, the Lord will dispose events as He sees good." (1 Paral. xix. 13.)

Thus Father Balthasar endeavoured to impart to his disciples, the sentiments of resignation and conformity which filled his heart. Happy the readers who will adopt them as the rule of their conduct; there is no blessing they may not hope for, as they have already seen.

CHAPTER LI.

REMARKABLE SENTIMENTS OF THE FATHER ON RESIGNATION AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD, TAKEN FROM HIS LETTERS TO SOME SICK PERSONS WHOM HE WISHED TO CONSOLE.

We have admired his power and industry in raising fallen souls, exciting the tepid, and encouraging the timid: we will now consider his holy skill in consoling the sick and the afflicted. His language on these occasions, was that of his own experience. He spoke to them on the sweetness of confidence in Divine Providence, on resignation, conformity to the will of God, varying his exhortations on these subjects in the most agreeable manner. I will mention a few facts, that my readers may judge for themselves of this.

He thus wrote to a person of rank, suffering from tertian fever: "St. Gertrude, in one of her extasies, knew by revelation that God, Who is goodness itself, having created men through love, is guided by that alone in all the events, whether painful or agreeable, that happen in their lives. Profoundly touched by this truth, she cried out: 'But, Lord, if it be so, those are blind indeed, who receive not with satisfaction and gratitude what Thou sendest them! It is no doubt for their greater good Thou afflictest them, since in this Thou takest counsel only of Thy love.' As for you, my dear Sir, you do not belong to the number of the blind, for I hear that the fever which torments you, is in your opinion a mark of the love God bears you, and the desire He has of your good. O thank Him affectionately for the grace He gives you to see things in their true light. I am deeply touched by it, and I unite my gratitude to yours with my whole heart."

To another who had just experienced great temporal misfortunes, he wrote: "It seems evident that God is pleased to see you in this position, for the profound peace you enjoy, comes without doubt from Him. O how happy I am to know that you wish to be governed in all things by His holy will. If you always follow this benevolent star, there is no doubt whatever, that you will gain great profit from these adversities. You yourself certainly have no doubt of it, for he who has received the light to know that God is all his good, easily recognizes the benefit of the misfor-

tunes that happen to him. He looks upon them, with reason, as swift coursers which bear him away, and enable him to traverse speedily the immense interval, that separates his poor soul from God. It is in effect certain, that temporal misfortunes bring us nearer to God, and those who think them obstacles to their progress, do an injury to Providence. Let worldlings call these trials misfortunes, disgrace, miseries, I can understand it, for they are all earthly; but the true christian who wishes to advance in virtue and please Him whom he loves more than himself, considers these events as favours, because they furnish him with an opportunity of satisfying this desire; and he believes himself so much the happier, as the crosses he bears are heavier."

He wrote to a Religious: "If God sends you pains of body and mind, it is that He may dwell with you by a more loving and familiar presence. I remember to have read in the life of St. Gertrude, that our Lord one day said to her: 'When I see a soul devoid of virtues, I send her trials, but I do not fail to visit her, because I take delight in those who suffer. When trials arrive, it is a forerunner of My visit; but because I love to be called upon, if they neglect it, I multiply their pains, and increase them until I hear them call to Me, to descend to their assistance.' This is a truth of faith: for the Psalmist has said that the Lord is near those who suffer. 'Prope est Dominus iis qui tribulati sunt corde.' God has Himself said that He is with the just man in suffering,

'Cum ipso sum in tribulatione.' (Ps. xc. 15.) Be assured of it, my Rev. Father, this is the secret of what you suffer: your pains are the effect of His love, not of His anger, not of the withdrawal of His mercy; but an embrace of His sweetness, an embrace which should make you the more joyous as its pressure is closer. I do not know God's future designs upon you, but if your sufferings increase, let your confidence increase in proportion; for confidence in God is truly salutary, according to these words of the apostle in his epistle to the Hebrews: 'They have been cured of their infirmity by faith:' 'Fide convaluerunt de infirmitate.' However, I wish to believe that God will not gather before it comes to maturity, a fruit which He has cultivated for His heavenly table. Fear not to desire and ask for health, if you are resolved to employ it solely in His service: this desire, far from offending, will please Him. I can quote His own testimony. 'My love for souls is so great,' He said to St. Gertrude, 'that it forces Me to grant the desires of the just whenever they spring from pure and disinterested zeal. Is it really for My service that the sick desire health? Let them ask it with confidence. Even more: if they desire it to obtain a greater reward, I will again yield, for I love them so much as to make their interests one with Mine.' How consoling should these sweet words be to those who feel similar desires! I sympathize with you in your sufferings, my Rev. Father, and especially in your aridity, for I know by experience to what weakness

a man feels himself reduced when God abandons him, so to speak, to his own strength: but His intention in this, is to make us more sensible of our complete incapacity, that instead of trusting to ourselves, we may place all our hopes in Him. To return to your sickness: I may as well tell you, that I myself have been at the gates of death, and yet I still live; take courage then, and firmly hope for your recovery. Now the surest means of regaining your health, is to abandon yourself, still praying and hoping, to the Divine will. This submission is so pleasing to God, that He has perhaps placed you in your present state, only to make you practise it. If you give Him this pleasure, He will say to death, what the angel said to Abraham, when his arm was ready to slay his only son: 'Do not strike.' God knew beforehand how far the fidelity of His servant would go, but he did not himself know it, nor would he have known it, but for this trial: now there is every reason to believe, that providence wishes to do you the same service. If then you imitate the generosity of Abraham, his consolation will be yours."

The following letters were written to pious women in similar circumstances. "I have read, Madam," he said to the first, "the account of your sufferings, and I believe them to be still greater than you represent them, for none but ordinary evils can be explained. What shall I say to you, to help you to bear so heavy a cross? I will first quote to you St. Augustin's words, 'The just, under affliction, console themselves with the

hope of one day contemplating a ravishing spectacle, the delights of which will be so great, that nothing we are able to imagine can give an idea of it.' Then I will ask you to meditate, in the meaning that I shall give them, on these words of the 32nd Psalm, 'God collects the waters of the sea as in a bottle, and encloses the depths as treasures.' 'Congregans sicut in utre aquas maris: ponens in thesauris abyssos.' The waters of the sea are a figure of temporal calamities, and poor human nature is the vase in which God permits them to overflow. His treasures are His counsels, His secret dispensations to sanctify our souls, dispensations so hidden that they are like an abyss before our eyes: and it is not without reason that He calls them treasures, for, from them we draw the most precious instructions, our greatest riches, and true felicity. Now when God unites in you so many sufferings, He performs the miracle I have just been speaking of. Entreat Him to make known to you this mystery, and in the mean time, admire in silence what your understanding cannot penetrate.

"God ardently desires to see in us a living image of His adorable Son, and when He afflicts us in all ways, it is without doubt, to form us to this divine resemblance. Since this Divine Son in whom He delights, has taken upon Himself, as faith teaches us, all human miseries, He cannot be pleased when we are unwilling to suffer anything for Him, and when we complain, instead of thanking Him for the crosses He sends us. If we will

not be patient through gratitude, let us at least be so for our own advantage. God does not punish the same faults twice; whenever therefore He sends us suffering and adversity, it is to efface what He would be obliged to punish later by fire, and wash away, so to speak with rose water, sins which cost Him so much Blood and so many tears. What more do we need to make us love and bear in silence trials so beneficial? You must understand these things and feel them deeply, in order to grieve for your sins and make a return of love to the Divine goodness. Until then His hand will be heavy upon you, and will add cross upon cross. But no: I hope you will soon put a stop to this severe trial by giving to God the satisfaction He requires, and gathering from it the fruit He wishes you to reap."

To the second he wrote: "Bless God, my child, that He vouchsafes to remember you, and remember what is written, that He chastises those He loves. Nature does not understand this doctrine; but we must not take counsel from nature on these occasions, but from faith. 'Those who have eyes to see,' says St. Augustine, 'look upon sufferings, as post-horses sent by God to take them more rapidly to Him.' I can also compare them to a ladder which He offers them, that they may ascend to higher virtues. Sometimes also, He uses them as a sword, to cut off affections of which His holy love is jealous: this is, I think, His design in your regard. He knows you wish to belong entirely to Him; and that you may be so,

He has made choice of a disease, which, by disfiguring you, will prevent you from pleasing men; you may therefore say to them with the Spouse in the Canticles: 'Do not look upon me, I possess nothing that is pleasing; for the sun has tanned me.' 'Nolite me considerare, quod fusca sim, quia decoloravit me sol.' (Cant. i. 6.) I rejoice at this happy misfortune, which will cause you to have no other friend but Him, because you will then love Him alone, and will give Him no cause for jealousy. It is a great grace, my child, and you cannot sufficiently thank and bless Him for it."

CHAPTER LII.

FATHER BALTHASAR GOES TO TOLEDO, WHEN HE BEGINS TO FILL THE OFFICE OF PROVINCIAL—HE DIES FOUR MONTHS LATER AT BELMONTE.

In 1580, at the end of Lent, this holy Religious left the College of Villa Garcia, and went to Val d'Olet, to take leave of the foundress, and several other distinguished persons of his acquaintance. I had gone thither some time previous, to receive priest's orders, and I was still there, as, on account of the approach of Easter, I had been kept to hear confessions. As I belonged to the province of Toledo, the Father took me for his companion in the visits he was going to make, which gave me the greatest pleasure, both on account of my

affection for him and the precious fruits I hoped to draw from his words and example. I had then the opportunity of observing the treasures of virtue contained in his beautiful soul, and I felt more than ever, the superhuman strength of his words. They were not only full of affability and sweetness, but penetrating as the word of God itself. He spoke only of Jesus Christ and of His faithful companions, but he did it with an unction, that awoke in all hearts the desire of being humble, poor, and obedient in imitation of this Divine Saviour. Not content with what he said to them in public exhortations, our Fathers returned to this subject in conversation, and drew from him such moving reflections, that my soul, usually very cold, was strongly inflamed by them: unhappily I did not long enjoy a society so profitable to me, for it pleased God to send me to the College of Villa Garcia. The Fathers of Toledo, who as yet knew their Provincial only from report, felt a certain degree of fear in receiving him, as he had been described to them as equally rigid to others and to himself; his humility and meekness, however, soon removed this unfavourable impression. His first care on entering the house, was to visit the ancient Fathers in their rooms, and when he approached them, he knelt down and kissed their hand. I need not say how much this extraordinary deference edified them. Father Strada, deeply moved, could not help saying to him: "A Provincial who thus humbles himself before his inferiors, cannot fail to govern the province well;

for where there is humility, there is also heavenly wisdom, as the Holy Ghost has said." He very soon verified what was predicted of him, by regulating everything in the house, with a skill and prudence far from common, and the good he did there, being soon known in the province, there was but one wish in every college, to receive his visit as soon as possible. He took for his companion a worthy Religious, who made an exact journal of his conduct, from which I have taken what I am going to relate. The holy man spent three or four hours each morning in prayer, after which he celebrated the holy mysteries, and said his little Hours, then he occupied himself with the business of his visitation, or continued his journey. In the colleges, he performed all the exercises required by the rule, at the appointed hours: when travelling, he anticipated them before his departure, and as he went, he prayed from morning until night. To be more at liberty for business, or to give more time to contemplation, he said matins during the night instead of the evening, and followed every day the same order in his actions. Everything gave reason to hope for the happiest results from his visit: but he was a ripe fruit, which God speedily placed at His heavenly table. After fulfilling his ministry in three houses only, giving moving exhortations, both to the Religious and the people in the churches, to enkindle in them the fire of divine love, the jubilee kept him in the last of the three. The Pope having prescribed a fast of two weeks, he

wished to accomplish it, notwithstanding his bad health: this long abstinence gave the finishing stroke to the exhaustion of his strength. He then continued his journey in intensely hot weather, and on arriving at Belmonte was seized with a fever, which did not appear serious to the physicians, but the danger soon showed itself: he did not, however, wait for it to prepare himself for death. When he took to his bed, he begged Father de Montoïa, his companion, to hear his general confession, and asked the next day for the last sacraments, which he received with a fervour that can be imagined. This being done, he showed a wish to receive no more visits, that he might be more free to occupy himself interiorly with God. His companion having said to him that he should think of putting some one in his place: "Do not speak to me of business any more, I entreat you," he replied, "the time for it is passed for me." The physician arrived just then, who, seeing the danger, and not knowing that he was aware of it, thought he must make it known to him, and began to do it with the greatest precaution. The Father, perceiving his perplexity, said: "Do not be afraid, Doctor, to tell me plainly that my end is near, for I do not cling to life, and I am not afraid of death." One of the Fathers, noticing the tranquillity of his soul, asked if he made the sacrifice of his life willingly? "Since death must come some day or other," he answered, "why not now?" He would not, doubtless through humility, acknowledge the joy of his soul, but it

was great and well grounded, since, as we have already said, he knew by revelation that his salvation was secure. When it was known in the college that his last hour was at hand, all the Fathers came and surrounded his deathbed in tears. He retained all his consciousness, and had not lost the use of speech: he said not a word, however, that he might not interrupt his sweet colloquies with God, and in this solemn silence and fervent prayer, he gave up his pure soul to God on the 25th July, 1580, in the forty-seventh year of his age, and the twenty-fifth year from his entrance into the Society.

No sooner was his death reported in the town, where he was known only by his reputation for sanctity, than many of the inhabitants hastened to the college, wishing at least to see in death him whom they had not seen in life, and the chapter of the college, to which he was no less a stranger, came without invitation to take part in the funeral, so true is it that God delights to honour His humble friends, according to these words of the Gospel: "He who humbles himself shall be exalted." "Qui se humiliaverit exaltabitur." The funeral service was most solemn, and the body was placed in the vault of the church, destined for the burial of the Religious of the house.

When the news of this loss reached Castile, there was general consternation, not only among our Religious, but also among those seculars who were happy enough to know him. The Duchess

of Frias was deeply affected. The grief of Madame Ulloia, the pious foundress of the college at Villa Garcia, of which we have spoken, was still more profound; she caused a solemn service to be celebrated for him in her chapel, at which the most distinguished persons in the country were present, less to help him by their prayers, than to recommend themselves to his; for the opinion of his sanctity was so general, that no one who had known him, doubted his being in heaven. As for me, when I heard of his premature death, I experienced at first a painful surprise, that God should take from us so valuable a man, at an age when he was still capable of doing much service; but afterwards I adored the judgments of God, and resigned myself to His will. What can be more just than submission to the Divine dispensations? He is the Master of the vineyard, and when it pleases Him to gather the grapes, no one has a right to say to Him: "Why dost Thou this?" "Cur ita facis?" (Job ix.) We know that He does nothing, and can do nothing, but for a most just and reasonable motive. What do we require more to bow our head and submit respectfully to His decrees? St. Anthony of Padua, St. Thomas of Aquin, St. Francis Xavier died about the same age. St. Francis of Assisi was very little older. What can we conclude from this, but that God has need of no man, and that in the services He requires from His friends, He regards more their interest than His own? May I not add that these examples are very useful, as they

admonish us to fear being surprised by death, and to keep ourselves always in readiness to appear before Him, "Estote parati."

CHAPTER LIII.

SEVERAL REVELATIONS ANNOUNCE HIS GLORY.—HE MAKES THE POWER OF HIS INTERCESSION FELT BY SEVERAL.

When great servants of God are in possession of glory, God generally allows it to be made known, either by apparitions, miracles, or by granting certain favours asked through their intercession; this was the case with regard to our illustrious Father.

There was at Burgos a woman servant, of the third Order of St. Francis, whom God favoured with His gifts, even so far as to grant her prophetic lights, which were always verified by their accomplishment. This pious woman, being in prayer at the moment Father Balthasar left this world, heard a voice saying to her: "Come and be present at the death of one of My faithful servants." She was at once rapt in extasy, and carried near to a death bed, which was surrounded by a multitude of blessed spirits, with Religious shining with great splendour; while she was admiring them, five others still more resplendent, made their appearance; one especially appeared to her so

beautiful and glorious, that she thought he was Jesus Christ; she was told, however, that she was mistaken. He took the dead man by the right hand, and raised him on his feet, the others surrounded him, and the procession ascended towards heaven, amidst the most delightful singing. It was the soul of the deceased man, that they thus bore away in triumph, for after they had gone, she saw the corpse stretched out upon the bed, and near it two angels, who embalmed it, and burned incense in its honour. She at first thought that this dead man was an Italian bishop, whom she knew to be a great servant of God; but God made known to her that he was a Jesuit, the Provincial of Toledo. As soon as the vision disappeared, she hastened to tell her confessor, Father Riverio, of it; at first he knew not what to think, as he had not heard of the holy man's illness, but when he heard the details of his death, he felt no longer any doubt that this revelation regarded him.

St. Teresa, who was then at Métine, having heard this sad news, was so deeply afflicted, that for a whole hour she could not control her tears. "How is it, my mother," said one of her nuns to her, "that, detached as you are from creatures, you feel the death of this Religious so much?" "Ah, my child," she answered, "if you knew what the Church loses in losing him, my grief would not surprise you." Thereupon she fell into an extasy, which lasted at least two hours, but, on her recovery, she told no one what she had

seen or learned in this elevation. It was only after her death that she revealed to one of her friends the glory of this holy man. The fact which follows was related to me by the pious woman herself, and I can assert that she is worthy of all confidence. "One day, when I was much afflicted, St. Teresa appeared to me, and said, among other things that she knew to be calculated to comfort my soul, 'I am a daughter of the Society of Jesus, for I have had for my confessor one of its members, whom I know and reverence now in glory.'" There is not a doubt that she meant Father Balthasar Alvarez. It is very true that she confessed to several Fathers of the same Society, but only in passing. Father Balthasar, on the contrary, was for a considerable time her ordinary confessor, took particular care of her, and contributed more than any one to make her a saint. Thus, she looked upon it as a signal favour to have had him, for the confessor and director of her soul. When she said that she knew and revered him in heaven, does not that imply that he occupies a higher place than herself, or at least one of great eminence?

We have also a more convincing proof of his glory than these particular revelations; it is this very history, in which I have related with the most perfect truth, his labours and his virtues, his charity for his neighbour, his humility under opprobrium, his patience in adversity, his conformity to the will of God in all circumstances, his almost continual prayer. There is no doubt at

all, that such a life, persevered in until death, must have gained for him a great reward. St. John wrote that he heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, henceforward, says the Spirit, they shall rest from their labours, for their works follow them." "Beati mortui qui in Domino moriuntur; amodo jam dicit Spiritus, ut requiescant a laboribus suis; opera enim illorum sequuntur illos." (Apoc. xiv. 13.) Thus, were there no miracles, the Father's works would abundantly suffice to make his eternal happiness certain; but this is not enough, for his life was not wanting in wonderful circumstances that I do not relate here, because I have mentioned them elsewhere. However, our Lord vouchsafed to confirm his sanctity by another kind of proof, I mean by the signal graces that several souls obtained after his death, through his intercession.

We will here lay down several general principles, necessary for the understanding of what we are going to say. The Church recommends us to invoke the saints, which supposes that they hear our prayers and take an interest in us: besides, this is clearly proved by Holy Writ. We see in the second Book of Machabees that the chief priest, Onias, after his death, was interested in the happiness of his people. Judas saw him at the beginning of a battle, stretching out his hands and praying for the nation. Near him was another venerable old man, whom Onias pointed out, saying, "This is the true friend of his brethren

and of the people of Israel; it is Jeremiah the prophet of God, who prays much for the people and the whole city." (ch. xv. 14.) "Hic est qui multum orat pro populo, et universa civitate." Thus Father Balthasar acted towards those souls, with whose guidance God had entrusted him during his life. From heaven he watched over their necessities, consoled them in their trials, and encouraged them to persevere in the path they had entered. I will prove this by two witnesses, well worthy of confidence. The first account was written by a noble and virtuous lady named Anna Enriquez.

"I was at Val d'Olet, when I heard the sad news of the death of Father Balthasar Alvarez. This news caused me inexpressible sorrow; for I owed much to this holy man, who had supported and encouraged me under a long series of trials, when my other friends tried in vain to console me. After passing great part of the night in tears, I fell asleep through weariness, and the next day on awaking, this sad death was my first thought; but, instead of lacerating my heart as it had done the previous day, it caused in my soul a joy that I cannot explain. It was so contrary to my habits, so opposed to the sentiments that this event would naturally inspire, and, besides, there was no reason for it, and it was perfectly involuntary. Nevertheless, I felt happy, all my sorrow was gone, it seemed to me as if my affliction had been a dream. In my surprise, having begun to reflect on what was passing within me, I saw the

imperfect motives of my grief for his absence take flight, like messengers who hasten with rapid steps, and I understood that it was rather an advantage than a misfortune to me, because here below, the communications of the servants of God with one another, are not without inconvenience and danger. While these reflections filled my mind, I seemed to see him near me, though we were in reality so far apart, and this imaginary presence caused me such joy that it would have been impossible to feel sad, even had I wished it."

"As the Church celebrated that day the Feast of the Transfiguration, I went to the professed house to go to confession and communion, and I spent the whole morning at the foot of the altar, in perfect tranquillity, and a delight of heart which was very unusual to me; these feelings lasted three whole days. I seemed to see this Father continually by my side, not in imagination, but in reality, though in an inexplicable way. After these three days, I sought for the same feelings in my heart without finding them, so that nothing remained but a delightful remembrance of him, such as I had during his life time when he was at a distance. Some years later, being one night greatly afflicted with interior trials, I began to recite some consoling Psalms to relieve my heart; but I did not find in them the consolation they had sometimes given me, my solitude was burdensome, and I lamented that I had no one to whom I could make known my grief. Extremely depressed, and

almost discouraged, I turned my head towards the wall, and remained there as if petrified, saying, 'Ah, if Father Balthasar were here, I should tell him what I suffer, and I am sure he would lighten the burden that overwhelms me;' scarcely had I said these words, than he was by me. I did not see him with my bodily eyes, but I felt him near me, at my right hand, and I felt a respect mingled with sweet joy. I did not hear him with my ears, but I felt that he suggested to my understanding many consoling things that he had said to me in life, and there was, as it were, an out-pouring of his spirit into mine. I then related to him my temptations, as if he had been in life, and it seemed to me that he answered, instructed, consoled, and offered to serve me, without however uttering a single word. I said to him: 'You do not speak to me, Father?' and he answered by a certain interior sign that pointed out heaven to me, as if to engage me to place my thoughts and affections there, which touched me deeply. I asked him why no one wrote his life when so many other saints had had panegyrists. He answered by another sign, which meant, 'that is of little consequence to me;' and I understood that the reason of his indifference, was the shortness of the time that these praises last. Finally, he gave me a great idea of his eminence in glory, and communicated to me a certain odour of eternity.

During another trial that I was suffering, he paid me a similar visit on the feast of St. Andrew. I saw him without his being visible to my eyes,

and heard him without his pronouncing a word. I implored his help, and at the same moment felt myself consoled and encouraged. I wished to thank him, but he made me understand that thanks were due to God, because He was my real benefactor. From these events I drew two conclusions: 1st. that he possesses great credit with God; 2nd. that this good Master has deigned to give him to me as a protector."

I will add to this, another testimony no less worthy of confidence. A soul of great reputation for virtue, being one day afflicted with interior desolation, remembered Father Balthasar, and said to him with fervent devotion: "Help me, Father." He appeared to her at once in imagination, and remained near her without saying a word. When she saw that his presence gave her no relief, she said to him: "Is it possible that you who took so much interest in me on earth, should have become insensible to my sorrows in the kingdom of charity? Help me, I entreat you." She then heard interiorly these words: "Endeavour to attain perfection." She at once felt joy revive in her heart with fresh courage. In a transport of gratitude, she stretched out her arm on the side where she felt the presence of her benefactor, saying: "Father give me your hand." At these words, she saw a hand presenting itself to her, but she attempted in vain to take hold of it; she touched nothing. This act of kindness made an impression upon her, as sweet as it was useful. I might add several similar

facts, but I think I have said enough to show the great probability of the illustrious Father's glory in Heaven.

CHAPTER LIV.

TRANSLATION OF HIS REMAINS TO VILLA GARCIA.

Formerly, whoever touched a dead body contracted a legal stain. Now, on the contrary, according to the reflection of St. Basil, he who touches the bones of a Saint, receives greater purity from them, for virtue issues from them to sanctify the soul. For this reason our Lord wills, that these precious relics be distributed in various places, that a greater number of the Church's children may partake in their salutary effects. He intends also by this means, to procure them more extended homage. But we should clearly understand the worship we should render them, that it may be judicious and truly Catholic. "If I am asked," said St. Ambrose, "what I venerate in the relics of Saints; I answer, the memory of those to whom they have belonged, the heroic virtues they practised, the wounds they received for Jesus Christ, the ruins of a temple formerly consecrated to the Holy Ghost, the seed of a blessed eternity, a sacred monument which teaches me to love God, to please Him at whatever cost, and to consider death calmly, and without terror. Why should I not honour bodies that are respected, or at least

feared, even by devils? Why should I refuse my homage to men whom God honoured during life, and who now reign with Him in heaven? Is it not to induce me to venerate these precious remains, that He manifests His power, by a multitude of miracles wrought at their tombs? This is why, as soon as a man departs this life, with the reputation of a saint, we are so anxious to possess his relics, or at least something that belonged to him.

This was precisely what was done after Father Balthasar's death, by those who entertained a similar opinion of him. Two illustrious ladies in particular, manifested their devotion in this manner. The first was D. Jane of Castile, to whom he had procured great spiritual benefit. This lady, on hearing of his translation, showed her veneration for him, by earnestly entreating that his head might be given her, which was done. She sent a Father of the Society for it, and caused it to be enclosed in a magnificent reliquary. The head still retained its hair, and was not entirely dried up, yet it exhaled no disagreeable odour, neither did the body, which was not entirely deprived of its flesh. It was not the case with the other bodies in the same vault, and in the same state. The exhalations from them were insupportable. The skeleton was exposed to the action of quick-lime to dry up the bones: and neither did these remains of burnt flesh cause the slightest unpleasant smell. When Jane of Castile received the much desired and precious treasure, she placed it in an oratory built for the purpose, and beautifully

decorated, in proof of her veneration and love for the illustrious Father.

The second lady of whom I have to speak, was the virtuous Duchess, who has been mentioned in connection with the foundation of the College of Villa Garcia. She wrote to Father Aquaviva, General of the Society, to ask that the body of her confessor might be removed to the college which he had, so to speak, created, and governed with so much wisdom, adding, that to possess near at hand, the remains of one to whom she was under such great obligations, would be to her a great consolation in her grief. This lady had done too much for the Society, one of whose most illustrious benefactresses she was, for her claim to be disregarded. Father General gave orders for the translation, and Father Salcedio, the holy man's nephew, was charged with the duty of arranging its accomplishment. In consequence, he went to fetch the precious body from Belmonte, and took it to Villa Garcia. As he passed by Val d'Olet, where the Duchess lived, he gave her a tooth of her dear spiritual master, which she received with the greatest joy. The Fathers of the professed house, wishing to see the bones of one who had been so dear to them, the coffin was opened before them, and so sweet a scent issued from it, that Father Acostio asked if any perfumes had been enclosed; Father Salcedio replied in the negative, adding that he intended to put some in the new shrine. "It is quite unnecessary," said Father Acostio, "all your perfumes will not equal the

ordour of his virtues which I perceive at this moment." It seemed that this sweet odour was perceived by him only, which is by no means incredible, for it often happens that graces of this kind are only granted to some particular friends. After a solemn service, and a discourse in honour of the good Father, the venerable remains of his mortality were deposited in the sanctuary of the inner chapel, which he had himself built for the noviciate.

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